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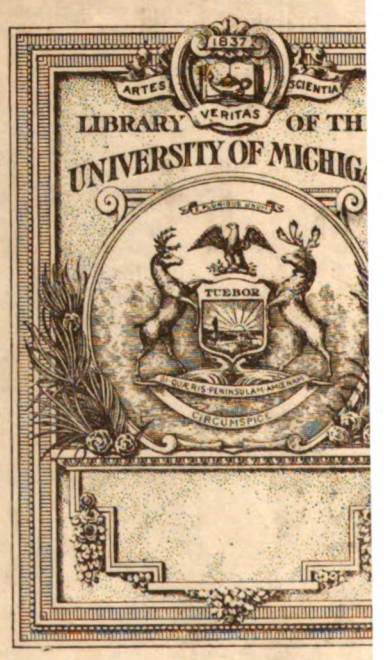

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THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE

By H. DE BALZAC

THE ALKAHEST

OR

THE HOUSE OF CLAËS

THE HIDDEN MASTERPIECE

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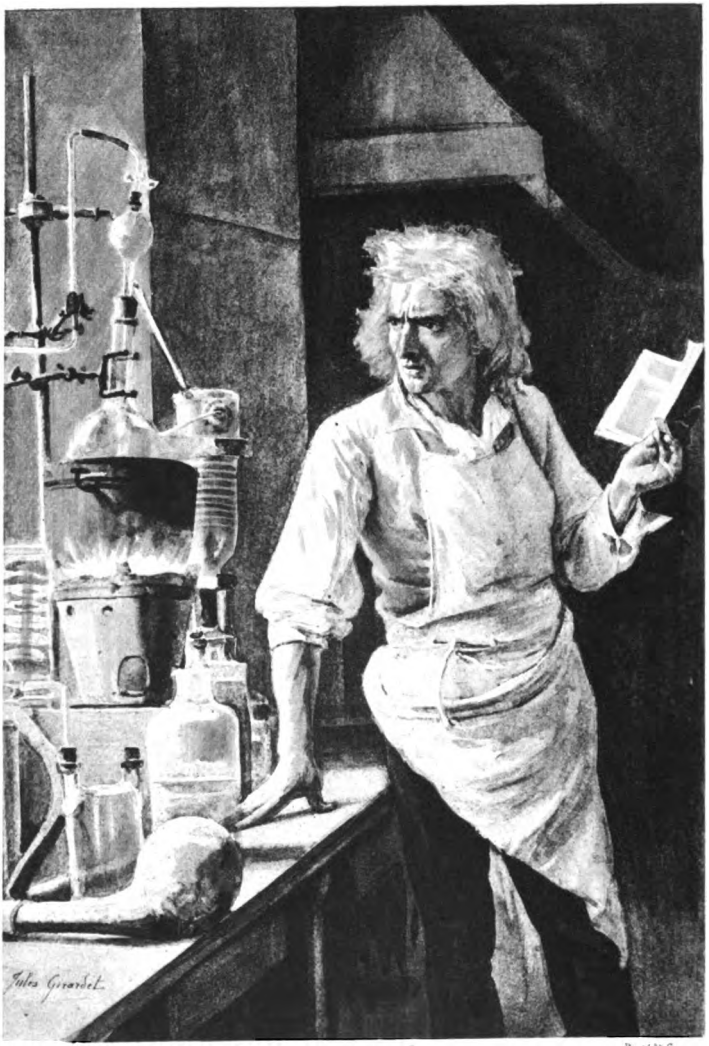

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The Alkahest.

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ATHENAEUM EDITION

THE WORKS OF

Honoré de Balzac

TRANSLATED BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

VOLUME XVII

THE ALKAHEST
THE HIDDEN MASTERPIECE
JUANA ADIEU THE RECRUIT EL VERDUGO
A DRAMA ON THE SEASHORE THE HATED SON
THE ELIXIR OF LIFE THE RED INN
MAÎTRE CORNÉLIUS

ILLUSTRATED

BY JULES GIRARDET AND L. CHALOU

THE ATHENAEUM CLUB
NEW YORK

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THE ALKAHEST:

OR,

THE HOUSE OF CLAËS.

I.

THERE is a house at Douai in the rue de Paris, whose aspect, interior arrangements, and details have preserved, to a greater degree than those of other domiciles, the characteristics of the old Flemish buildings, so naïvely adapted to the patriarchal manners and customs of that excellent land. Before describing this house it may be well, in the interest of other writers, to explain the necessity for such didactic preliminaries, — since they have roused a protest from certain ignorant and voracious readers who want emotions without undergoing the generating process, the flower without the seed, the child without gestation. Is Art supposed to have higher powers than Nature?

The events of human existence, whether public or private, are so closely allied to architecture that the

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majority of observers can reconstruct nations and individuals, in their habits and ways of life, from the remains of public monuments or the relics of a home. Archæology is to social nature what comparative anatomy is to organized nature. A mosaic tells the tale of a society, as the skeleton of an ichthyosaurus opens up a creative epoch. All things are linked together, and all are therefore deducible. Causes suggest effects, effects lead back to causes. Science resuscitates even the warts of the past ages.

Hence the keen interest inspired by an architectural description, provided the imagination of the writer does not distort essential facts. The mind is enabled by rigid deduction to link it with the past; and to man, the past is singularly like the future; tell him what has been, and you seldom fail to show him what will be. It is rare indeed that the picture of a locality where lives are lived does not recall to some their dawning hopes, to others their wasted faith. The comparison between a present which disappoints man's secret wishes and a future which may realize them, is an inexhaustible source of sadness or of placid content.

Thus, it is almost impossible not to feel a certain tender sensibility over a picture of Flemish life, if the accessories are clearly given. Why so? Perhaps, among other forms of existence, it offers the best conclusion to man's uncertainties. It has its social festivities, its

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family ties, and the easy affluence which proves the stability of its comfortable well-being; it does not lack repose amounting almost to beatitude; but, above all, it expresses the calm monotony of a frankly sensuous happiness, where enjoyment stifles desire by anticipating it. Whatever value a passionate soul may attach to the tumultuous life of feeling, it never sees without emotion the symbols of this Flemish nature, where the throbbings of the heart are so well regulated that superficial minds deny the heart's existence. The crowd prefers the abnormal force which overflows to that which moves with steady persistence. The world has neither time nor patience to realize the immense power concealed beneath an appearance of uniformity. Therefore, to impress this multitude carried away on the current of existence, passion, like a great artist, is compelled to go beyond the mark, to exaggerate, as did Michael Angelo, Bianca Capello, Mademoiselle de la Vallière, Beethoven, and Paganini. Far-seeing minds alone disapprove such excess, and respect only the energy represented by a finished execution whose perfect quiet charms superior men. The life of this essentially thrifty people amply fulfils the conditions of happiness which the masses desire as the lot of the average citizen.

A refined materialism is stamped on all the habits of Flemish life. English comfort is harsh in tone and

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arid in color; whereas the old-fashioned Flemish interiors rejoice the eye with their mellow tints, and the feelings with their genuine heartiness. There, work implies no weariness, and the pipe is a happy adaptation of Neapolitan *far-niente*. Thence comes the peaceful sentiment in Art (its most essential condition), patience, and the element which renders its creations durable, namely, conscience. Indeed, the Flemish character lies in the two words, patience and conscience: words which seem at first to exclude the richness of poetic light and shade, and to make the manners and customs of the country as flat as its vast plains, as cold as its foggy skies. And yet it is not so. Civilization has brought her power to bear, and has modified all things, even the effects of climate. If we observe attentively the productions of various parts of the globe, we are surprised to find that the prevailing tints from the temperate zones are gray or fawn, while the more brilliant colors belong to the products of the hotter climates. The manners and customs of a country must naturally conform to this law of nature.

Flanders, which in former times was essentially dun-colored and monotonous in tint, learned the means of irradiating its smoky atmosphere through its political vicissitudes, which brought it under the successive dominion of Burgundy, Spain, and France, and threw it into fraternal relations with Germany and Holland.

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From Spain it acquired the luxury of scarlet dyes and shimmering satins, tapestries of vigorous design, plumes, mandolins, and courtly bearing. In exchange for its linen and its laces, it brought from Venice that fairy glass-ware in which wine sparkles and seems the mellower. From Austria it learned the ponderous diplomacy which, to use a popular saying, takes three steps backward to one forward; while its trade with India poured into it the grotesque designs of China and the marvels of Japan.

And yet, in spite of its patience in gathering such treasures, its tenacity in parting with no possession once gained, its endurance of all things, Flanders was considered nothing more than the general storehouse of Europe, until the day when the discovery of tobacco brought into one smoky outline the scattered features of its national physiognomy. Thenceforth, and notwithstanding the parcelling out of their territory, the Flemings became a people homogeneous through their pipes and beer.[1]

After assimilating, by constant sober regulation of conduct, the products and the ideas of its masters and its neighbors, this country of Flanders, by nature so

[1] Flanders was parcelled into three divisions; of which Eastern Flanders, capital Ghent, and Western Flanders, capital Bruges, are two provinces of Belgium. French Flanders, capital Lille, is the Departement du Nord of France. Douai, about twenty miles from Lille, is the chief town of the arrondissement du Nord.

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tame and devoid of poetry, worked out for itself an original existence, with characteristic manners and customs which bear no signs of servile imitation. Art stripped off its ideality and produced form alone. We may seek in vain for plastic grace, the swing of comedy, dramatic action, musical genius, or the bold flight of ode and epic. On the other hand, the people are fertile in discoveries, and trained to scientific discussions which demand time and the midnight oil. All things bear the ear-mark of temporal enjoyment. There men look exclusively to the thing that is: their thoughts are so scrupulously bent on supplying the wants of this life that they have never risen, in any direction, above the level of this present earth. The sole idea they have ever conceived of the future is that of a thrifty, prosaic statecraft: their revolutionary vigor came from a domestic desire to live as they liked, with their elbows on the table, and to take their ease under the projecting roofs of their own porches.

The consciousness of well-being and the spirit of independence which comes of prosperity begot in Flanders, sooner than elsewhere, that craving for liberty which, later, permeated all Europe. Thus the compactness of their ideas, and the tenacity which education grafted on their nature made the Flemish people a formidable body of men in the defence of their rights. Among them nothing is half-done, — neither houses, furniture,

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dikes, husbandry, nor revolutions; and they hold a monopoly of all that they undertake. The manufacture of linen, and that of lace, a work of patient agriculture and still more patient industry, are hereditary like their family fortunes. If we were asked to show in human form the purest specimen of solid stability, we could do no better than point to a portrait of some old burgomaster, capable, as was proved again and again, of dying in a commonplace way, and without the incitements of glory, for the welfare of his Free-town.

Yet we shall find a tender and poetic side to this patriarchal life, which will come naturally to the surface in the description of an ancient house which, at the period when this history begins, was one of the last in Douai to preserve the old-time characteristics of Flemish life.

Of all the towns in the Departement du Nord, Douai is, alas, the most modernized: there the innovating spirit has made the greatest strides, and the love of social progress is the most diffused. There the old buildings are daily disappearing, and the manners and customs of a venerable past are being rapidly obliterated. Parisian ideas and fashions and modes of life now rule the day, and soon nothing will be left of that ancient Flemish life but the warmth of its hospitality, its traditional Spanish courtesy, and the wealth and cleanliness of Holland. Mansions of white stone are replacing

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the old brick buildings, and the cosy comfort of Batavian interiors is fast yielding before the capricious elegance of Parisian novelties.

The house in which the events of this history occurred stands at about the middle of the rue de Paris, and has been known at Douai for more than two centuries as the House of Claës. The Van Claës were formerly one of the great families of craftsmen to whom, in various lines of production, the Netherlands owed a commercial supremacy which it has never lost. For a long period of time the Claës lived at Ghent, and were, from generation to generation, the syndics of the powerful Guild of Weavers. When the great city revolted against Charles V., who tried to suppress its privileges, the head of the Claës family was so deeply compromised in the rebellion that, foreseeing a catastrophe and bound to share the fate of his associates, he secretly sent wife, children, and property to France before the Emperor invested the town. The syndic's forebodings were justified. Together with other burghers who were excluded from the capitulation, he was hanged as a rebel, though he was, in reality, the defender of the liberties of Ghent.

The death of Claës and his associates bore fruit. Their needless execution cost the King of Spain the greater part of his possessions in the Netherlands. Of all the seed sown in the earth, the blood of martyrs

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gives the quickest harvest. When Philip the Second, who punished revolt through two generations, stretched his iron sceptre over Douai, the Claës preserved their great wealth by allying themselves in marriage with the very noble family of Molina, whose elder branch, then poor, thus became rich enough to buy the county of Nourho which they had long held titularly in the kingdom of Léon.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, after vicissitudes which are of no interest to our present purpose, the family of Claës was represented at Douai in the person of Monsieur Balthazar Claës-Molina, Comte de Nourho, who preferred to be called simply Balthazar Claës. Of the immense fortune amassed by his ancestors, who had kept in motion over a thousand looms, there remained to him some fifteen thousand francs a year from landed property in the arrondissement of Douai, and the house in the rue de Paris, whose furniture in itself was a fortune. As to the family possessions in Léon, they had been in litigation between the Molinas of Douai and the branch of the family which remained in Spain. The Molinas of Léon won the domain and assumed the title of Comtes de Nourho, though the Claës alone had a legal right to it. But the pride of a Belgian burgher was superior to the haughty arrogance of Castile: after the civil rights were instituted, Balthazar Claës cast aside the ragged

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robes of his Spanish nobility for his more illustrious descent from the Ghent martyr.

The patriotic sentiment was so strongly developed in the families exiled under Charles V. that, to the very close of the eighteenth century, the Claës remained faithful to the manners and customs and traditions of their ancestors. They married into none but the purest burgher families, and required a certain number of aldermen and burgomasters in the pedigree of every bride-elect before admitting her to the family. They sought their wives in Bruges or Ghent, in Liège or in Holland; so that the time-honored domestic customs might be perpetuated around their hearthstones. This social group became more and more restricted, until, at the close of the last century, it mustered only some seven or eight families of the parliamentary nobility, whose manners and flowing robes of office and magisterial gravity (partly Spanish) harmonized well with the habits of their life.

The inhabitants of Douai held the family in a religious esteem that was well-nigh superstition. The sturdy honesty, the untainted loyalty of the Claës, their unfailing decorum of manners and conduct, made them the objects of a reverence which found expression in the name, — the House of Claës. The whole spirit of ancient Flanders breathed in that mansion, which afforded to the lovers of burgher antiquities a type of the

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modest houses which the wealthy craftsmen of the Middle Ages constructed for their homes.

The chief ornament of the façade was an oaken door, in two sections, studded with nails driven in the pattern of a quincunx, in the centre of which the Claës pride had carved a pair of shuttles. The recess of the doorway, which was built of freestone, was topped by a pointed arch bearing a little shrine surmounted by a cross, in which was a statuette of Sainte-Geneviève plying her distaff. Though time had left its mark upon the delicate workmanship of portal and shrine, the extreme care taken of it by the servants of the house allowed the passers-by to note all its details.

The casing of the door, formed by fluted pilasters, was dark gray in color, and so highly polished that it shone as if varnished. On either side of the doorway, on the ground-floor, were two windows, which resembled all the other windows of the house. The casing of white stone ended below the sill in a richly carved shell, and rose above the window in an arch, supported at its apex by the head-piece of a cross, which divided the glass sashes in four unequal parts; for the transversal bar, placed at the height of that in a Latin cross, made the lower sashes of the window nearly double the height of the upper, the latter rounding at the sides into the arch. The coping of the arch was ornamented with three rows of brick, placed one above the other, the

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bricks alternately projecting or retreating to the depth of an inch, giving the effect of a Greek moulding. The glass panes, which were small and diamond-shaped, were set in very slender leading, painted red. The walls of the house, of brick pointed with white mortar, were braced at regular distances, and at the angles of the house, by stone courses.

The first floor was pierced by five windows, the second by three, while the attic had only one large circular opening in five divisions, surrounded by a freestone moulding and placed in the centre of the triangular pediment defined by the gable-roof, like the rose-window of a cathedral. At the peak was a vane in the shape of a weaver's shuttle threaded with flax. Both sides of the large triangular pediment which formed the wall of the gable were dentelled squarely into something like steps, as low down as the string-course of the upper floor, where the rain from the roof fell to right and left of the house through the jaws of a fantastic gargoyle. A freestone foundation projected like a step at the base of the house; and on either side of the entrance, between the two windows, was a trap-door, clamped by heavy iron bands, through which the cellars were entered, — a last vestige of ancient usages.

From the time the house was built, this façade had been carefully cleaned twice a year. If a little mortar fell from between the bricks, the crack was instantly

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filled up. The sashes, the sills, the copings, were dusted oftener than the most precious sculptures in the Louvre. The front of the house bore no signs of decay; notwithstanding the deepened color which age had given to the bricks, it was as well preserved as a choice old picture, or some rare book cherished by an amateur, which would be ever new were it not for the blistering of our climate and the effect of gases, whose pernicious breath threatens our own health.

The cloudy skies and humid atmosphere of Flanders, and the shadows produced by the narrowness of the street, sometimes diminished the brilliancy which the old house derived from its cleanliness; moreover, the very care bestowed upon it made it rather sad and chilling to the eye. A poet might have wished some leafage about the shrine, a little moss in the crevices of the freestone, a break in the even courses of the brick; he would have longed for the swallow to build her nest in the red coping that roofed the arches of the windows. The precise and immaculate air of this façade, a little worn by perpetual rubbing, gave the house a tone of severe propriety and estimable decency which would have driven a romanticist out of the neighborhood, had he happened to take lodgings over the way.

When a visitor had pulled the braided iron wire bell-cord which hung from the top of the pilaster of the doorway, and the servant-woman, coming from within,

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had admitted him through the side of the double-door in which was a small grated loop-hole, that half of the door escaped from her hand and swung back by its own weight with a solemn, ponderous sound that echoed along the roof of a wide paved archway and through the depths of the house, as though the door had been of iron. This archway, painted to resemble marble, always clean and daily sprinkled with fresh sand, led into a large court-yard paved with smooth square stones of a greenish color. On the left were the linen-rooms, kitchens, and servants' hall; to the right, the wood-house, coal-house, and offices, whose doors, walls, and windows were decorated with designs kept exquisitely clean. The daylight, threading its way between four red walls chequered with white lines, caught rosy tints and reflections which gave a mysterious grace and fantastic appearance to faces, and even to trifling details.

A second house, exactly like the building on the street, and called in Flanders the "back-quarter," stood at the farther end of the court-yard, and was used exclusively as the family dwelling. The first room on the ground-floor was a parlor, lighted by two windows on the court-yard, and two more looking out upon a garden which was of the same size as the house. Two glass doors, placed exactly opposite to each other, led at one end of the room to the garden, at the other to the court-yard, and were in line with the archway

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and the street door; so that a visitor entering the latter could see through to the greenery which draped the lower end of the garden. The front building, which was reserved for receptions and the lodging-rooms of guests, held many objects of art and accumulated wealth, but none of them equalled in the eyes of a Claës, nor indeed in the judgment of a connoisseur, the treasures contained in the parlor, where for over two centuries the family life had glided on.

The Claës who died for the liberties of Ghent, and who might in these days be thought a mere ordinary craftsman if the historian omitted to say that he possessed over forty thousand silver marks, obtained by the manufacture of sail-cloth for the all-powerful Venetian navy, — this Claës had a friend in the famous sculptor in wood, Van Huysum of Bruges. The artist had dipped many a time into the purse of the rich craftsman. Some time before the rebellion of the men of Ghent, Van Huysum, grown rich himself, had secretly carved for his friend a wall-decoration in ebony, representing the chief scenes in the life of Van Artevelde, — that brewer of Ghent who, for a brief hour, was King of Flanders. This wall-covering, of which there were no less than sixty panels, contained about fourteen hundred principal figures, and was held to be Van Huysum's masterpiece. The officer appointed to guard the burghers whom Charles V. determined to hang when

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he re-entered his native town, proposed, it is said, to Van Claës to let him escape if he would give him Van Huysum's great work; but the weaver had already despatched it to Douai.

The parlor, whose walls were entirely panelled with this carving, which Van Huysum, out of regard for the martyr's memory, came to Douai to frame in wood painted in lapis-lazuli with threads of gold, is therefore the most complete work of this master, whose least carvings now sell for nearly their weight in gold. Hanging over the fire-place, Van Claës the martyr, painted by Titian in his robes as president of the Court of Parchons, still seemed the head of the family, who venerated him as their greatest man. The chimney-piece, originally in stone with a very high mantle-shelf, had been made over in marble during the last century; on it now stood an old clock and two candlesticks with five twisted branches, in bad taste, but of solid silver. The four windows were draped by wide curtains of red damask with a flowered black design, lined with white silk; the furniture, covered with the same material, had been renovated in the time of Louis XIV. The floor, evidently modern, was laid in large squares of white wood bordered with strips of oak. The ceiling, formed of many oval panels, in each of which Van Huysum had carved a grotesque mask, had been respected and allowed to keep the brown tones of the native Dutch oak.

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In the four corners of this parlor were truncated columns, supporting candelabra exactly like those on the mantle-shelf; and a round table stood in the middle of the room. Along the walls card-tables were symmetrically placed. On two gilded consoles with marble slabs there stood, at the period when this history begins, two glass globes filled with water, in which, above a bed of sand and shells, red and gold and silver fish were swimming about. The room was both brilliant and sombre. The ceiling necessarily absorbed the light and reflected none. Although on the garden side all was bright and glowing, and the sunshine danced upon the ebony carvings, the windows on the court-yard admitted so little light that the gold threads in the lapis-lazuli scarcely glittered on the opposite wall. This parlor, which could be gorgeous on a fine day, was usually, under the Flemish skies, filled with soft shadows and melancholy russet tones, like those shed by the sun on the tree-tops of the forests in autumn.

It is unnecessary to continue this description of the House of Claës, in other parts of which many scenes of this history will occur: at present, it is enough to make known its general arrangement.

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II.

Towards the end of August, 1812, on a Sunday evening after vespers, a woman was sitting in a deep armchair placed before one of the windows looking out upon the garden. The sun's rays fell obliquely upon the house and athwart the parlor, breaking into fantastic lights on the carved panellings of the wall, and wrapping the woman in a crimson halo projected through the damask curtains which draped the window. Even an ordinary painter, had he sketched this woman at this particular moment, would assuredly have produced a striking picture of a head that was full of pain and melancholy. The attitude of the body, and that of the feet stretched out before her, showed the prostration of one who loses consciousness of physical being in the concentration of powers absorbed in a fixed idea: she was following its gleams in the far future, just as sometimes on the shores of the sea, we gaze at a ray of sunlight which pierces the clouds and draws a luminous line to the horizon.

The hands of this woman hung nerveless outside the arms of her chair, and her head, as if too heavy to hold

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up, lay back upon its cushions. A dress of white cambric, very full and flowing, hindered any judgment as to the proportions of her figure, and the bust was concealed by the folds of a scarf crossed on the bosom and negligently knotted. If the light had not thrown into relief her face, which she seemed to show in preference to the rest of her person, it would still have been impossible to escape riveting the attention exclusively upon it. Its expression of stupefaction, which was cold and rigid despite hot tears that were rolling from her eyes, would have struck the most thoughtless mind. Nothing is more terrible to behold than excessive grief that is rarely allowed to break forth, of which traces were left on this woman's face like lava congealed about a crater. She might have been a dying mother compelled to leave her children in abysmal depths of wretchedness, unable to bequeath them to any human protector.

The countenance of this lady, then about forty years of age and not nearly so far from handsome as she had been in her youth, bore none of the characteristics of a Flemish woman. Her thick black hair fell in heavy curls upon her shoulders and about her cheeks. The forehead, very prominent, and narrow at the temples, was yellow in tint, but beneath it sparkled two black eyes that were capable of emitting flames. Her face, altogether Spanish, dark skinned, with little color and

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pitted by the small-pox, attracted the eye by the beauty of its oval, whose outline, though slightly impaired by time, preserved a finished elegance and dignity, and regained at times its full perfection when some effort of the soul restored its pristine purity. The most noticeable feature in this strong face was the nose, aquiline as the beak of an eagle, and so sharply curved at the middle as to give the idea of an interior malformation; yet there was an air of indescribable delicacy about it, and the partition between the nostrils was so thin that a rosy light shone through it. Though the lips, which were large and curved, betrayed the pride of noble birth, their expression was one of kindliness and natural courtesy.

The beauty of this vigorous yet feminine face might indeed be questioned, but the face itself commanded attention. Short, deformed, and lame, this woman remained all the longer unmarried because the world obstinately refused to credit her with gifts of mind. Yet there were men who were deeply stirred by the passionate ardor of that face and its tokens of ineffable tenderness, and who remained under a charm that was seemingly irreconcilable with such personal defects.

She was very like her grandfather, the Duke of Casa-Réal, a grandee of Spain. At this moment, when we first see her, the charm which in earlier days despotically grasped the soul of poets and lovers of poesy now

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emanated from that head with greater vigor than at any former period of her life, spending itself, as it were, upon the void, and expressing a nature of all-powerful fascination over men, though it was at the same time powerless over destiny.

When her eyes turned from the glass globes, where they were gazing at the fish they saw not, she raised them with a despairing action, as if to invoke the skies. Her sufferings seemed of a kind that are told to God alone. The silence was unbroken save for the chirp of crickets and the shrill whirr of a few locusts, coming from the little garden then hotter than an oven, and the dull sound of silver and plates, and the moving of chairs in the adjoining room, where a servant was preparing to serve the dinner.

At this moment, the distressed woman roused herself from her abstraction and listened attentively; she took her handkerchief, wiped away her tears, attempted to smile, and so resolutely effaced the expression of pain that was stamped on every feature that she presently seemed in the state of happy indifference which comes with a life exempt from care. Whether it were that the habit of living in this house to which infirmities confined her enabled her to perceive certain natural effects that are imperceptible to the senses of others, but which persons under the influence of excessive feeling are keen to discover, or whether Nature, in compensation

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for her physical defects, had given her more delicate sensations than better organized beings, — it is certain that this woman had heard the steps of a man in a gallery built above the kitchens and the servants' hall, by which the front house communicated with the "back-quarter." The steps grew more distinct. Soon, without possessing the power of this ardent creature to abolish space and meet her other self, even a stranger would have heard the foot-fall of a man upon the staircase which led down from the gallery to the parlor.

The sound of that step would have startled the most heedless being into thought; it was impossible to hear it coolly. A precipitate, headlong step produces fear. When a man springs forward and cries, "Fire!" his feet speak as loudly as his voice. If this be so, then a contrary gait ought not to cause less powerful emotion. The slow approach, the dragging step of the coming man might have irritated an unreflecting spectator; but an observer, or a nervous person, would undoubtedly have felt something akin to terror at the measured tread of feet that seemed devoid of life, and under which the stairs creaked loudly, as though two iron weights were striking them alternately. The mind recognized at once either the heavy, undecided step of an old man or the majestic tread of a great thinker bearing the worlds with him.

When the man had reached the lowest stair, and had

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planted both feet upon the tiled floor with a hesitating, uncertain movement, he stood still for a moment on the wide landing which led on one side to the servants' hall, and on the other to the parlor through a door concealed in the panelling of that room, — as was another door, leading from the parlor to the dining-room. At this moment a slight shudder, like the sensation caused by an electric spark, shook the woman seated in the arm-chair; then a soft smile brightened her lips, and her face, moved by the expectation of a pleasure, shone like that of an Italian Madonna. She suddenly gained strength to drive her terrors back into the depths of her heart. Then she turned her face to the panel of the wall which she knew was about to open, and which in fact was now pushed in with such brusque violence that the poor woman herself seemed jarred by the shock.

Balthazar Claës suddenly appeared, made a few steps forward, did not look at the woman, or if he looked at her did not see her, and stood erect in the middle of the parlor, leaning his half-bowed head on his right hand. A sharp pang to which the woman could not accustom herself, although it was daily renewed, wrung her heart, dispelled her smile, contracted the sallow forehead between the eyebrows, indenting that line which the frequent expression of excessive feeling scores so deeply; her eyes filled with tears, but she wiped them quickly as she looked at Balthazar.

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It was impossible not to be deeply impressed by this head of the family of Claës. When young, he must have resembled the noble family martyr who had threatened to be another Artevelde to Charles V.; but as he stood there at this moment, he seemed over sixty years of age, though he was only fifty; and this premature old age had destroyed the honorable likeness. His tall figure was slightly bent, — either because his labors, whatever they were, obliged him to stoop, or that the spinal column was curved by the weight of his head. He had a broad chest and square shoulders, but the lower parts of the body were lank and wasted, though nervous; and this discrepancy in a physical organization evidently once perfect puzzled the mind which endeavored to explain this anomalous figure by some possible singularities of the man's life.

His thick blond hair, ill cared-for, fell over his shoulders in the Dutch fashion, and its very disorder was in keeping with the general eccentricity of his person. His broad brow showed certain protuberances which Gall identifies with poetic genius. His clear and full blue eyes had the brusque vivacity which may be noticed in searchers for occult causes. The nose, probably perfect in early life, was now elongated, and the nostrils seemed to have gradually opened wider from an involuntary tension of the olfactory muscles. The cheek-bones were very prominent, which made the

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cheeks themselves, already withered, seem more sunken; his mouth, full of sweetness, was squeezed in between the nose and a short chin, which projected sharply. The shape of the face, however, was long rather than oval, and the scientific doctrine which sees in every human face a likeness to an animal would have found its confirmation in that of Balthazar Claës, which bore a strong resemblance to a horse's head. The skin clung closely to the bones, as though some inward fire were incessantly drying its juices. Sometimes, when he gazed into space, as if to see the realization of his hopes, it almost seemed as though the flames that devoured his soul were issuing from his nostrils.

The inspired feelings that animate great men shone forth on the pale face furrowed with wrinkles, on the brow haggard with care like that of an old monarch, but above all they gleamed in the sparkling eye, whose fires were fed by chastity imposed by the tyranny of ideas and by the inward consecration of a great intellect. The cavernous eyes seemed to have sunk in their orbits through midnight vigils and the terrible reaction of hopes destroyed, yet ceaselessly reborn. The zealous fanaticism inspired by an art or a science was evident in this man; it betrayed itself in the strange, persistent abstraction of his mind expressed by his dress and bearing, which were in keeping with the anomalous peculiarities of his person.

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His large, hairy hands were dirty, and the nails, which were very long, had deep black lines at their extremities. His shoes were not cleaned and the shoestrings were missing. Of all that Flemish household, the master alone took the strange liberty of being slovenly. His black cloth trousers were covered with stains, his waistcoat was unbuttoned, his cravat awry, his greenish coat ripped at the seams, — completing an array of signs, great and small, which in any other man would have betokened a poverty begotten of vice, but which in Balthazar Claës was the negligence of genius.

Vice and Genius too often produce the same effects; and this misleads the common mind. What is genius but a long excess which squanders time and wealth and physical powers, and leads more rapidly to a hospital than the worst of passions? Men even seem to have more respect for vices than for genius, since to the latter they refuse credit. The profits accruing from the hidden labors of the brain are so remote that the social world fears to square accounts with the man of learning in his lifetime, preferring to get rid of its obligations by not forgiving his misfortunes or his poverty.

If, in spite of this inveterate forgetfulness of the present, Balthazar Claës had abandoned his mysterious abstractions, if some sweet and companionable meaning had revisited that thoughtful countenance, if the fixed eyes had lost their rigid strain and shone with

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feeling, if he had ever looked humanly about him and returned to the real life of common things, it would indeed have been difficult not to do involuntary homage to the winning beauty of his face and the gracious soul that would then have shone from it. As it was, all who looked at him regretted that the man belonged no more to the world at large, and said to one another: "He must have been very handsome in his youth." A vulgar error! Never was Balthazar Claës's appearance more poetic than at this moment. Lavater, had he seen him, would fain have studied that head so full of patience, of Flemish loyalty, and pure morality, — where all was broad and noble, and passion seemed calm because it was strong.

The conduct of this man could not be otherwise than pure; his word was sacred, his friendships seemed undeviating, his self-devotedness complete: and yet the will to employ those qualities in patriotic service, for the world or for the family, was directed, fatally, elsewhere. This citizen, bound to guard the welfare of a household, to manage property, to guide his children towards a noble future, was living outside the line of his duty and his affections, in communion with an attendant spirit. A priest might have thought him inspired by the word of God; an artist would have hailed him as a great master; an enthusiast would have taken him for a seer of the Swedenborgian faith.

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At the present moment, the dilapidated, uncouth, and ruined clothes that he wore contrasted strangely with the graceful elegance of the woman who was sadly admiring him. Deformed persons who have intellect, or nobility of soul, show an exquisite taste in their apparel. Either they dress simply, convinced that their charm is wholly moral, or they make others forget their imperfections by an elegance of detail which diverts the eye and occupies the mind. Not only did this woman possess a noble soul, but she loved Balthazar Claës with that instinct of the woman which gives a foretaste of the communion of angels. Brought up in one of the most illustrious families of Belgium, she would have learned good taste had she not possessed it; and now, taught by the desire of constantly pleasing the man she loved, she knew how to clothe herself admirably, and without producing incongruity between her elegance and the defects of her conformation. The bust, however, was defective in the shoulders only, one of which was noticeably much larger than the other.

She looked out of the window into the court-yard, then towards the garden, as if to make sure she was alone with Balthazar, and presently said, in a gentle voice and with a look full of a Flemish woman's submissiveness, — for between these two love had long since driven out the pride of her Spanish nature: —

"Balthazar, are you so very busy? this is the

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thirty-third Sunday since you have been to mass or vespers."

Claës did not answer; his wife bowed her head, clasped her hands, and waited: she knew that his silence meant neither contempt nor indifference, only a tyrannous preoccupation. Balthazar was one of those beings who preserve deep in their souls and after long years all their youthful delicacy of feeling; he would have thought it criminal to wound by so much as a word a woman weighed down by the sense of physical disfigurement. No man knew better than he that a look, a word, suffices to blot out years of happiness, and is the more cruel because it contrasts with the unfailing tenderness of the past: our nature leads us to suffer more from one discord in our happiness than pleasure coming in the midst of trouble can bring us joy.

Presently Balthazar appeared to waken; he looked quickly about him, and said, —

"Vespers? Ah, yes! the children are at vespers."

He made a few steps forward, and looked into the garden, where magnificent tulips were growing on all sides; then he suddenly stopped short as if brought up against a wall, and cried out, —

"Why should they not combine within a given time?"

"Is he going mad?" thought the wife, much terrified

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To give greater interest to the present scene, which was called forth by the situation of their affairs, it is absolutely necessary to glance back at the past lives of Balthazar Claës and the granddaughter of the Duke of Casa-Réal.

Towards the year 1783, Monsieur Balthazar Claës-Molina de Nourho, then twenty-two years of age, was what is called in France a fine man. He came to finish his education in Paris, where he acquired excellent manners in the society of Madame d'Egmont, Count Horn, the Prince of Aremberg, the Spanish ambassador, Helvetius, and other Frenchmen originally from Belgium, or coming lately thence, whose birth or wealth won them admittance among the great seigneurs who at that time gave the tone to social life. Young Claës found several relations and friends ready to launch him into the great world at the very moment when that world was about to fall. Like other young men, he was at first more attracted by glory and science than by the vanities of life. He frequented the society of scientific men, particularly Lavoisier, who at that time was better known to the world for his enormous fortune as a *fermier-général* than for his discoveries in chemistry, — though later the great chemist was to eclipse the man of wealth.

Balthazar grew enamoured of the science which Lavoisier cultivated, and became his devoted disciple;

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but he was young, and handsome as Helvetius, and before long the Parisian women taught him to distil wit and love exclusively. Though he had studied chemistry with such ardor that Lavoisier commended him, he deserted science and his master for those mistresses of fashion and good taste from whom young men take finishing lessons in knowledge of life, and learn the usages of good society, which in Europe forms, as it were, one family.

The intoxicating dream of social success lasted but a short time. Balthazar left Paris, weary of a hollow existence which suited neither his ardent soul nor his loving heart. Domestic life, so calm, so tender, which the very name of Flanders recalled to him, seemed far more fitted to his character and to the aspirations of his heart. No gilded Parisian salon had effaced from his mind the harmonies of the panelled parlor and the little garden where his happy childhood had slipped away. A man must needs be without a home to remain in Paris, — Paris, the city of cosmopolitans, of men who wed the world, and clasp her with the arms of Science, Art, or Power.

The son of Flanders came back to Douai, like La Fontaine's pigeon to its nest; he wept with joy as he re-entered the town on the day of the Gayant procession, — Gayant, the superstitious luck of Douai, the glory of Flemish traditions, introduced there at the

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time the Claës family had emigrated from Ghent. The death of Balthazar's father and mother had left the old mansion deserted, and the young man was occupied for a time in settling its affairs. His first grief over, he wished to marry; he needed the domestic happiness whose every religious aspect had fastened upon his mind. He even followed the family custom of seeking a wife in Ghent, or at Bruges, or Antwerp; but it happened that no woman whom he met there suited him. Undoubtedly, he had certain peculiar ideas as to marriage; from his youth he had been accused of never following the beaten track.

One day, at the house of a relation in Ghent, he heard a young lady, then living in Brussels, spoken of in a manner which gave rise to a long discussion. Some said that the beauty of Mademoiselle de Temninck was destroyed by the imperfections of her figure; others declared that she was perfect in spite of her defects. Balthazar's old cousin, at whose house the discussion took place, assured his guests that, handsome or not, she had a soul that would make him marry her were he a marrying man; and he told how she had lately renounced her share of her parents' property to enable her brother to make a marriage worthy of his name; thus preferring his happiness to her own, and sacrificing her future to his interests, — for it was not to be supposed that Mademoiselle de Temninck would marry late

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in life and without property when, young and wealthy, she had met with no aspirant.

A few days later, Balthazar Claës made the acquaintance of Mademoiselle de Temninck; with whom he fell deeply in love. At first, Joséphine de Temninck thought herself the object of a mere caprice, and refused to listen to Monsieur Claës; but passion is contagious; and to a poor girl who was lame and ill-made, the sense of inspiring love in a young and handsome man carries with it such strong seduction that she finally consented to allow him to woo her.

It would need a volume to paint the love of a young girl humbly submissive to the verdict of a world that calls her plain, while she feels within her the irresistible charm which comes of sensibility and true feeling. It involves fierce jealousy of happiness, freaks of cruel vengeance against some fancied rival who wins a glance, — emotions, terrors, unknown to the majority of women, and which ought, therefore, to be more than indicated. The doubt, the dramatic doubt of love, is the key-note of this analysis, where certain souls will find once more the lost, but unforgotten, poetry of their early struggles; the passionate exaltations of the heart which the face must not betray; the fear that we may not be understood, and the boundless joy of being so; the hesitations of the soul which recoils upon itself, and the magnetic propulsions which give to the eyes an infini-

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tude of shades; the promptings to suicide caused by a word, dispelled by an intonation; trembling glances which veil an inward daring; sudden desires to speak and act that are paralyzed by their own violence; the secret eloquence of common phrases spoken in a quivering voice; the mysterious workings of that pristine modesty of soul and that divine discernment which lead to hidden generosities, and give so exquisite a flavor to silent devotion; in short, all the loveliness of young love, and the weaknesses of its power.

Mademoiselle Joséphine de Temninck was coquettish from nobility of soul. The sense of her obvious imperfections made her as difficult to win as the handsomest of women. The fear of some day displeasing the eye roused her pride, destroyed her trustfulness, and gave her the courage to hide in the depths of her heart that dawning happiness which other women delight in making known by their manners, — wearing it proudly, like a coronet. The more love urged her towards Balthazar, the less she dared to express her feelings. The glance, the gesture, the question and answer as it were of a pretty woman, so flattering to the man she loves, would they not be in her case mere humiliating speculation? A beautiful woman can be her natural self, — the world overlooks her little follies or her clumsiness; whereas a single criticising glance checks the noblest expression on the lips of an ugly woman, adds to the ill-grace of

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her gesture, gives timidity to her eyes and awkwardness to her whole bearing. She knows too well that to her alone the world condones no faults; she is denied the right to repair them; indeed, the chance to do so is never given. This necessity of being perfect and on her guard at every moment, must surely chill her faculties and numb their exercise? Such a woman can exist only in an atmosphere of angelic forbearance. Where are the hearts from which forbearance comes with no alloy of bitter and stinging pity?

These thoughts, to which the codes of social life had accustomed her, and the sort of consideration more wounding than insult shown to her by the world, — a consideration which increases a misfortune by making it apparent, — oppressed Mademoiselle de Temninck with a constant sense of embarrassment, which drove back into her soul its happiest expression, and chilled and stiffened her attitudes, her speech, her looks. Loving and beloved, she dared to be eloquent or beautiful only when alone. Unhappy and oppressed in the broad daylight of life, she might have been enchanting could she have expanded in the shadow. Often, to test the love thus offered to her, and at the risk of losing it, she refused to wear the draperies that concealed some portion of her defects, and her Spanish eyes grew entrancing when they saw that Balthazar thought her beautiful as before.

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Nevertheless, even so, distrust spoiled the rare moments when she yielded herself to happiness. She asked herself if Claës were not seeking a domestic slave, — one who would necessarily keep the house? whether he had himself no secret imperfection which obliged him to be satisfied with a poor, deformed girl? Such perpetual misgivings gave a priceless value to the few short hours during which she trusted the sincerity and the permanence of a love which was to avenge her on the world. Sometimes she provoked hazardous discussions, and probed the inner consciousness of her lover by exaggerating her defects. At such times she often wrung from Balthazar truths that were far from flattering; but she loved the embarrassment into which he fell when she had led him to say that what he loved in a woman was a noble soul and the devotion which made each day of life a constant happiness; and that after a few years of married life the handsomest of women was no more to a husband than the ugliest. After gathering up what there was of truth in all such paradoxes tending to reduce the value of beauty, Balthazar would suddenly perceive the ungraciousness of his remarks, and show the goodness of his heart by the delicate transitions of thought with which he proved to Mademoiselle de Temninck that she was perfect in his eyes.

The spirit of devotion which, it may be, is the crown

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of love in a woman, was not lacking in this young girl, who had always despaired of being loved; at first, the prospect of a struggle in which feeling and sentiment would triumph over actual beauty tempted her; then, she fancied a grandeur in giving herself to a man in whose love she did not believe; finally, she was forced to admit that happiness, however short its duration might be, was too precious to resign.

Such hesitations, such struggles, giving the charm and the unexpectedness of passion to this noble creature, inspired Balthazar with a love that was well-nigh chivalric.

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III.

The marriage took place at the beginning of the year 1795. Husband and wife came to Douai that the first days of their union might be spent in the patriarchal house of the Claës, — the treasures of which were increased by those of Mademoiselle de Temninck, who brought with her several fine pictures of Murillo and Velasquez, the diamonds of her mother, and the magnificent wedding-gifts, made to her by her brother, the Duke of Casa-Réal.

Few women were ever happier than Madame Claës. Her happiness lasted for fifteen years without a cloud, diffusing itself like a vivid light into every nook and detail of her life. Most men have inequalities of character which produce discord, and deprive their households of the harmony which is the ideal of a home; the majority are blemished with some littleness or meanness, and meanness of any kind begets bickering. One man is honorable and diligent, but hard and crabbed; another kindly, but obstinate; this one loves his wife, yet his will is arbitrary and uncertain; that other, preoccupied by ambition, pays off his affections

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as he would a debt, bestows the luxuries of wealth but deprives the daily life of happiness, — in short, the average man of social life is essentially incomplete, without being signally to blame. Men of talent are as variable as barometers; genius alone is intrinsically good.

For this reason unalloyed happiness is found at the two extremes of the moral scale. The good-natured fool and the man of genius alone are capable — the one through weakness, the other by strength — of that equanimity of temper, that unvarying gentleness, which soften the asperities of daily life. In the one, it is indifference or stolidity; in the other, indulgence and a portion of the divine thought of which he is the interpreter, and which needs to be consistent alike in principle and application. Both natures are equally simple; but in one there is vacancy, in the other depth. This is why clever women are disposed to take dull men as the small change for great ones.

Balthazar Claës carried his greatness into the lesser things of life. He delighted in considering conjugal love as a magnificent work; and like all men of lofty aims who can bear nothing imperfect, he wished to develop all its beauties. His powers of mind enlivened the calm of happiness, his noble nature marked his attentions with the charm of grace. Though he shared the philosophical tenets of the eighteenth century, he installed a chaplain in his home until 1801 (in spite of

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the risk he ran from the revolutionary decrees), so that he might not thwart the Spanish fanaticism which his wife had sucked in with her mother's milk: later, when public worship was restored in France, he accompanied her to mass every Sunday. His passion never ceased to be that of a lover. The protecting power, which women like so much, was never exercised by this husband, lest to that wife it might seem pity. He treated her with exquisite flattery as an equal, and sometimes mutinied against her, as men will, as though to brave the supremacy of a pretty woman. His lips wore a smile of happiness, his speech was ever tender; he loved his Joséphine for herself and for himself, with an ardor that crowned with perpetual praise the qualities and the loveliness of a wife.

Fidelity, often the result of social principle, religious duty, or self-interest on the part of a husband, was in this case involuntary, and not without the sweet flatteries of the spring-time of love. Duty was the only marriage obligation unknown to these lovers, whose love was equal; for Balthazar Claës found the complete and lasting realization of his hopes in Mademoiselle de Temninck; his heart was satisfied but not wearied, the man within him was ever happy.

Not only did the daughter of Casa-Réal derive from her Spanish blood the intuition of that science which varies pleasure and makes it infinite, but she possessed

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the spirit of unbounded self-devotion, which is the genius of her sex as grace is that of beauty. Her love was a blind fanaticism which, at a nod, would have sent her joyously to her death. Balthazar's own delicacy had exalted the generous emotions of his wife, and inspired her with an imperious need of giving more than she received. This mutual exchange of happiness which each lavished upon the other, put the mainspring of her life visibly outside of her personality, and filled her words, her looks, her actions, with an ever-growing love. Gratitude fertilized and varied the life of each heart; and the certainty of being all in all to one another excluded the paltry things of existence, while it magnified the smallest accessories.

The deformed woman whom her husband thinks straight, the lame woman whom he would not have otherwise, the old woman who seems ever young — are they not the happiest creatures of the feminine world? Can human passion go beyond it? The glory of a woman is to be adored for a defect. To forget that a lame woman does not walk straight may be the glamour of a moment, but to love her because she is lame is the deification of her defects. In the gospel of womanhood it is written: "Blessed are the imperfect, for theirs is the kingdom of Love." If this be so, surely beauty is a misfortune; that fugitive flower counts for too much in the feeling that a woman inspires; often

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she is loved for her beauty as another is married for her money. But the love inspired or bestowed by a woman disinherited of the frail advantages pursued by the sons of Adam, is true love, the mysterious passion, the ardent embrace of souls, a sentiment for which the day of disenchantment never comes. That woman has charms unknown to the world, from whose jurisdiction she withdraws herself: she is beautiful with a meaning; her glory lies in making her imperfections forgotten, and thus she constantly succeeds in doing so.

The celebrated attachments of history were nearly all inspired by women in whom the vulgar mind would have found defects, — Cleopatra, Jeanne de Naples, Diane de Poitiers, Mademoiselle de la Vallière, Madame de Pompadour; in fact, the majority of the women whom love has rendered famous were not without infirmities and imperfections, while the greater number of those whose beauty is cited as perfect came to some tragic end of love.

This apparent singularity must have a cause. It may be that man lives more by sentiment than by sense; perhaps the physical charm of beauty is limited, while the moral charm of a woman without beauty is infinite. Is not this the moral of the fable on which the Arabian Nights are based? An ugly wife of Henry VIII. might have defied the axe, and subdued to herself the inconstancy of her master.

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By a strange chance, not inexplicable, however, in a girl of Spanish origin, Madame Claës was uneducated. She knew how to read and write, but up to the age of twenty, at which time her parents withdrew her from a convent, she had read none but ascetic books. On her first entrance into the world, she was eager for pleasure and learned only the flimsy art of dress; she was, moreover, so deeply conscious of her ignorance that she dared not join in conversation; for which reason she was supposed to have little mind. Yet, the mystical education of a convent had one good result; it left her feelings in full force and her natural powers of mind uninjured. Stupid and plain as an heiress in the eyes of the world, she became intellectual and beautiful to her husband. During the first years of their married life, Balthazar endeavored to give her at least the knowledge that she needed to appear to advantage in good society: but he was doubtless too late, she had no memory but that of the heart. Joséphine never forgot anything that Claës told her relating to themselves; she remembered the most trifling circumstances of their happy life; but of her evening studies nothing remained to her on the morrow.

This ignorance might have caused much discord between husband and wife, but Madame Claës's understanding of the passion of love was so simple and ingenuous, she loved her husband so religiously, so

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sacredly, and the thought of preserving her happiness made her so adroit, that she managed always to seem to understand him, and it was seldom indeed that her ignorance was evident. Moreover, when two persons love one another so well that each day seems for them the beginning of their passion, phenomena arise out of this teeming happiness which change all the conditions of life. It resembles childhood, careless of all that is not laughter, joy, and merriment. Then, when life is in full activity, when its hearths glow, man lets the fire burn without thought or discussion, without considering either the means or the end.

No daughter of Eve ever more truly understood the calling of a wife than Madame Claës. She had all the submission of a Flemish woman, but her Spanish pride gave it a higher flavor. Her bearing was imposing; she knew how to command respect by a look which expressed her sense of birth and dignity: but she trembled before Claës; she held him so high, so near to God, carrying to him every act of her life, every thought of her heart, that her love was not without a certain respectful fear which made it keener. She proudly assumed all the habits of a Flemish bourgeoise, and put her self-love into making the home life liberally happy, — preserving every detail of the house in scrupulous cleanliness, possessing nothing that did not serve the purposes of true comfort, supplying her table with

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the choicest food, and putting everything within those walls into harmony with the life of her heart.

The pair had two sons and two daughters. The eldest, Marguerite, was born in 1796. The last child was a boy, now three years old, named Jean-Balthazar. The maternal sentiment in Madame Claës was almost equal to her love for her husband; and there rose in her soul, especially during the last days of her life, a terrible struggle between those nearly balanced feelings, of which the one became, as it were, an enemy of the other. The tears and the terror that marked her face at the moment when this tale of a domestic drama then lowering over the quiet house begins, were caused by the fear of having sacrificed her children to her husband.

In 1805, Madame Claës's brother died without children. The Spanish law does not allow a sister to succeed to territorial possessions, which follow the title; but the duke had left her in his will about sixty thousand ducats, and this sum the heirs of the collateral branch did not seek to retain. Though the feeling which united her to Balthazar Claës was such that no thought of personal interest could ever sully it, Joséphine felt a certain pleasure in possessing a fortune equal to that of her husband, and was happy in giving something to one who had so nobly given everything to her. Thus, a mere chance turned a marriage which worldly

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minds had declared foolish, into an excellent alliance, seen from the standpoint of material interests. The use to which this sum of money should be put became, however, somewhat difficult to determine.

The House of Claës was so richly supplied with furniture, pictures, and objects of art of priceless value, that it was difficult to add anything worthy of what was already there. The tastes of the family through long periods of time had accumulated these treasures. One generation followed the quest of noble pictures, leaving behind it the necessity of completing a collection still unfinished; and thus the taste became hereditary in the family. The hundred pictures which adorned the gallery leading from the family building to the reception-rooms on the first floor of the front house, as well as some fifty others placed about the salons, were the product of the patient researches of three centuries. Among them were choice specimens of Rubens, Ruysdael, Vandyke, Terburg, Gerard Dow, Teniers, Mieris, Paul Potter, Wouvermans, Rembrandt, Hobbema, Cranach, and Holbein. French and Italian pictures were in a minority, but all were authentic and masterly.

Another generation had fancied Chinese and Japanese porcelains: this Claës was eager after rare furniture, that one for silver-ware; in fact, each and all had their mania, their passion, — a trait which belongs in

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a striking degree to the Flemish character. The father of Balthazar, a last relic of the once famous Dutch society, left behind him the finest known collection of tulips.

Besides these hereditary riches, which represented an enormous capital, and were the choice ornament of the venerable house, — a house that was simple as a shell outside but, like a shell, adorned within by pearls of price and glowing with rich color, — Balthazar Claës possessed a country-house on the plain of Orchies, not far from Douai. Instead of basing his expenses, as Frenchmen do, upon his revenues, he followed the old Dutch custom of spending only a fourth of his income. Twelve hundred ducats a year put his costs of living at a level with those of the richest men of the place. The promulgation of the Civil Code proved the wisdom of this course. Compelling, as it did, the equal division of property, the Title of Succession would some day leave each child with limited means, and disperse the treasures of the Claës collection. Balthazar, therefore, in concert with Madame Claës, invested his wife's property so as to secure to each child a fortune eventually equal to his own. The house of Claës still maintained its moderate scale of living, and bought woodlands somewhat the worse for the wars that had laid waste the country, but which in ten years' time, if well-preserved, would return an enormous value.

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The upper ranks of society in Douai, which Monsieur Claës frequented, appreciated so justly the noble character and qualities of his wife that, by tacit consent she was released from those social duties to which the provinces cling so tenaciously. During the winter season, when she lived in town, she seldom went into society; society came to her. She received every Wednesday, and gave three grand dinners every month. Her friends felt that she was more at ease in her own house; where, indeed, her passion for her husband and the care she bestowed on the education of her children tended to keep her.

Such had been, up to the year 1809, the general course of this household, which had nothing in common with the ordinary run of conventional ideas, though the outward life of these two persons, secretly full of love and joy, was like that of other people. Balthazar Claës's passion for his wife, which she had known how to perpetuate, seemed, to use his own expression, to spend its inborn vigor and fidelity on the cultivation of happiness, which was far better than the cultivation of tulips (though to that he had always had a leaning), and dispensed him from the duty of following a mania like his ancestors.

At the close of this year, the mind and the manners of Balthazar Claës underwent a fatal change, — a change which began so gradually that at first Madame

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Claës did not think it necessary to inquire the cause. One night her husband went to bed with a mind so preoccupied that she felt it incumbent on her to respect his mood. Her womanly delicacy and her submissive habits always led her to wait for Balthazar's confidence; which, indeed, was assured to her by so constant an affection that she had never had the slightest opening for jealousy. Though certain of obtaining an answer whenever she should make the inquiry, she still retained enough of the earlier impressions of her life to dread a refusal. Besides, the moral malady of her husband had its phases, and only came by slow degrees to the intolerable point at which it destroyed the happiness of the family.

However occupied Balthazar Claës might be, he continued for several months cheerful, affectionate, and ready to talk; the change in his character showed itself only by frequent periods of absent-mindedness. Madame Claës long hoped to hear from her husband himself the nature of the secret employment in which he was engaged; perhaps, she thought, he would reveal it when it developed some useful result; many men are led by pride to conceal the nature of their efforts, and only make them known at the moment of success. When the day of triumph came, surely domestic happiness would return, more vivid than ever when Balthazar became aware of this chasm in the life of love, which

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his heart would surely disavow. Joséphine knew her husband well enough to be certain that he would never forgive himself for having made his Pépita less than happy during several months.

She kept silence therefore, and felt a sort of joy in thus suffering by him for him: her passion had a tinge of that Spanish piety which allows no separation between religion and love, and believes in no sentiment without suffering. She waited for the return of her husband's affection, saying daily to herself, "To-morrow it may come," — treating her happiness as though it were an absent friend.

During this stage of her secret distress, she conceived her last child. Horrible crisis, which revealed a future of anguish! In the midst of her husband's abstractions love showed itself on this occasion an abstraction even greater than the rest. Her woman's pride, hurt for the first time, made her sound the depths of the unknown abyss which separated her from the Claës of earlier days. From that time Balthazar's condition grew rapidly worse. The man formerly so wrapped up in his domestic happiness, who played for hours with his children on the parlor carpet or round the garden paths, who seemed able to exist only in the light of his Pépita's dark eyes, did not even perceive her pregnancy, seldom shared the family life, and even forgot his own.

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The longer Madame Claës postponed inquiring into the cause of his preoccupation the less she dared to do so. At the very idea, her blood ran cold and her voice grew faint. At last the thought occurred to her that she had ceased to please her husband, and then indeed she was seriously alarmed. That fear now filled her mind, drove her to despair, then to feverish excitement, and became the text of many an hour of melancholy revery. She defended Balthazar at her own expense, calling herself old and ugly; then she imagined a generous though humiliating consideration for her in this secret occupation by which he secured to her a negative fidelity; and she resolved to give him back his independence by allowing one of those unspoken divorces which make the happiness of many a marriage.

Before bidding farewell to conjugal life, Madame Claës made some attempt to read her husband's heart, and found it closed. Little by little, she saw him become indifferent to all that he had formerly loved; he neglected his tulips, he cared no longer for his children. There could be no doubt that he was given over to some passion that was not of the heart, but which, to a woman's mind, is not less withering. His love was dormant, not lost: this might be a consolation, but the misfortune remained the same.

The continuance of such a state of things is explained by one word, — hope, the secret of all con-

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jugal situations. It so happened that whenever the poor woman reached a depth of despair which gave her courage to question her husband, she met with a few brief moments of happiness when she was able to feel that if Balthazar were indeed in the clutch of some devilish power, he was permitted, sometimes at least, to return to himself. At such moments, when her heaven brightened, she was too eager to enjoy its happiness to trouble him with importunate questions: later, when she endeavored to speak to him, he would suddenly escape, leave her abruptly, or drop into the gulf of meditation from which no word of hers could drag him.

Before long the reaction of the moral upon the physical condition began its ravages, — at first imperceptibly, except to the eyes of a loving woman following the secret thought of a husband through all its manifestations. Often she could scarcely restrain her tears when she saw him, after dinner, sink into an armchair by the corner of the fireplace, and remain there, gloomy and abstracted. She noted with terror the slow changes which deteriorated that face, once, to her eyes, sublime through love: the life of the soul was retreating from it; the structure remained, but the spirit was gone. Sometimes the eyes were glassy, and seemed as if they had turned their gaze and were looking inward. When the children had gone to bed, and the silence and solitude

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oppressed her, Pépita would say, "My friend, are you ill?" and Balthazar would make no answer; or if he answered, he would come to himself with a quiver, like a man snatched suddenly from sleep, and utter a "No" so harsh and grating that it fell like a stone on the palpitating heart of his wife.

Though she tried to hide this strange state of things from her friends, Madame Claës was obliged sometimes to allude to it. The social world of Douai, in accordance with the custom of provincial towns, had made Balthazar's aberrations a topic of conversation, and many persons were aware of certain details that were still unknown to Madame Claës. Disregarding the reticence which politeness demanded, a few friends expressed to her so much anxiety on the subject that she found herself compelled to defend her husband's peculiarities.

"Monsieur Claës," she said, "has undertaken a work which wholly absorbs him; its success will eventually redound not only to the honor of the family but to that of his country."

This mysterious explanation was too flattering to the ambition of a town whose local patriotism and desire for glory exceed those of other places, not to be readily accepted, and it produced on all minds a reaction in favor of Balthazar.

The supposition of his wife was, to a certain extent,

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well-founded. Several artificers of various trades had long been at work in the garret of the front house, where Balthazar went early every morning. After remaining, at first, for several hours, an absence to which his wife and household grew gradually accustomed, he ended by being there all day. But — unexpected shock! — Madame Claës learned through the humiliating medium of some women friends, who showed surprise at her ignorance, that her husband constantly imported instruments of physical science, valuable materials, books, machinery, etc., from Paris, and was on the highroad to ruin in search of the Philosophers' Stone. She ought, so her kind friends added, to think of her children, and her own future; it was criminal not to use her influence to draw Monsieur Claës from the fatal path on which he had entered.

Though Madame Claës, with the tone and manner of a great lady, silenced these absurd speeches, she was inwardly terrified in spite of her apparent confidence, and she resolved to break through her present system of silence and resignation. She brought about one of those little scenes in which husband and wife are on an equal footing; less timid at such a moment, she dared to ask Balthazar the reason for his change, the motive of his constant seclusion. The Flemish husband frowned, and replied: —

"My dear, you could not understand it."

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Soon after, however, Joséphine insisted on being told the secret, gently complaining that she was not allowed to share all the thoughts of one whose life she shared.

"Very well, since it interests you so much," said Balthazar, taking his wife upon his knee and caressing her black hair, "I will tell you that I have returned to the study of chemistry, and I am the happiest man on earth."

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IV.

Two years after the winter when Monsieur Claës returned to chemistry, the aspect of his house was changed. Whether it were that society was affronted by his perpetual absent-mindedness and chose to think itself in the way, or that Madame Claës's secret anxieties made her less agreeable than before, certain it is that she no longer saw any but her intimate friends. Balthazar went nowhere, shut himself up in his laboratory all day, sometimes stayed there all night, and only appeared in the bosom of his family at dinner-time.

After the second year he no longer passed the summer at his country-house, and his wife was unwilling to live there alone. Sometimes he went to walk and did not return till the following day, leaving Madame Claës a prey to mortal anxiety during the night. After causing a fruitless search for him through the town, whose gates, like those of other fortified places, were closed at night, it was impossible to send into the country, and the unhappy woman could only wait and suffer till morning. Balthazar, who had forgotten the hour at which the gates closed, would come tranquilly

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home the next day, quite unmindful of the tortures his absence had inflicted on his family; and the happiness of getting him back proved as dangerous an excitement of feeling to his wife as her fears of the preceding night. She kept silence and dared not question him, for when she did so on the occasion of his first absence, he answered with an air of surprise: —

"Well, what of it? Can I not take a walk?"

Passions never deceive. Madame Claës's anxieties corroborated the rumors she had taken so much pains to deny. The experience of her youth had taught her to understand the polite pity of the world. Resolved not to undergo it a second time, she withdrew more and more into the privacy of her own house, now deserted by society and even by her nearest friends.

Among these many causes of distress, the negligence and disorder of Balthazar's dress, so degrading to a man of his station, was not the least bitter to a woman accustomed to the exquisite nicety of Flemish life. At first Josephine endeavored, in concert with Balthazar's valet, Lemulquinier, to repair the daily devastation of his clothing, but even that she was soon forced to give up. The very day when Balthazar, unaware of the substitution, put on new clothes in place of those that were stained, torn, or full of holes, he made rags of them.

The poor wife, whose perfect happiness had lasted fifteen years, during which time her jealousy had never

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once been roused, was apparently and suddenly nothing in the heart where she had lately reigned. Spanish by race, the feelings of a Spanish woman rose within her when she discovered her rival in a Science that allured her husband from her: torments of jealousy preyed upon her heart and renewed her love. What could she do against Science? Should she combat that tyrannous, unyielding, growing power? Could she kill an invisible rival? Could a woman, limited by nature, contend with an Idea whose delights are infinite, whose attractions are ever new? How make head against the fascination of ideas that spring the fresher and the lovelier out of difficulty, and entice a man so far from this world that he forgets even his dearest loves?

At last one day, in spite of Balthazar's strict orders, Madame Claës resolved to follow him, to shut herself up in the garret where his life was spent, and struggle hand to hand against her rival by sharing her husband's labors during the long hours he gave to that terrible mistress. She determined to slip secretly into the mysterious laboratory of seduction, and obtain the right to be there always. Lemulquinier alone had that right, and she meant to share it with him; but to prevent his witnessing the contention with her husband which she feared at the outset, she waited for an opportunity when the valet should be out of the way. For a while she studied the goings and comings of the man

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with angry impatience; did he not know that which was denied to her — all that her husband hid from her, all that she dared not inquire into? Even a servant was preferred to a wife!

The day came; she approached the place, trembling, yet almost happy. For the first time in her life she encountered Balthazar's anger. She had hardly opened the door before he sprang upon her, seized her, threw her roughly on the staircase, so that she narrowly escaped rolling to the bottom.

"God be praised! you are still alive!" he cried, raising her.

A glass vessel had broken into fragments over Madame Claës, who saw her husband standing by her, pale, terrified, and almost livid.

"My dear, I forbade you to come here," he said, sitting down on the stairs, as though prostrated. "The saints have saved your life! By what chance was it that my eyes were on the door when you opened it? We have just escaped death."

"Then I might have been happy!" she exclaimed.

"My experiment has failed," continued Balthazar. "You alone could I forgive for that terrible disappointment. I was about to decompose nitrogen. Go back to your own affairs."

Balthazar re-entered the laboratory and closed the door.

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"Decompose nitrogen!" said the poor woman as she re-entered her chamber, and burst into tears.

The phrase was unintelligible to her. Men, trained by education to have a general conception of everything, have no idea how distressing it is for a woman to be unable to comprehend the thought of the man she loves. More forbearing than we, these divine creatures do not let us know when the language of their souls is not understood by us; they shrink from letting us feel the superiority of their feelings, and hide their pain as gladly as they silence their wishes: but, having higher ambitions in love than men, they desire to wed not only the heart of a husband, but his mind.

To Madame Claës the sense of knowing nothing of a science which absorbed her husband filled her with a vexation as keen as the beauty of a rival might have caused. The struggle of woman against woman gives to her who loves the most the advantage of loving best; but a mortification like this only proved Madame Claës's powerlessness and humiliated the feelings by which she lived. She was ignorant; and she had reached a point where her ignorance parted her from her husband. Worse than all, last and keenest torture, he was risking his life, he was often in danger — near her, yet far away, and she might not share, nor even know, his peril. Her position became, like hell, a moral prison from which there was no issue, in which

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there was no hope. Madame Claës resolved to know at least the outward attractions of this fatal science, and she began secretly to study chemistry in the books. From this time the family became, as it were, cloistered.

Such were the successive changes brought by this dire misfortune upon the family of Claës, before it reached the species of atrophy in which we find it at the moment when this history begins.

The situation grew daily more complicated. Like all passionate women, Madame Claës was disinterested. Those who truly love know that considerations of money count for little in matters of feeling and are reluctantly associated with them. Nevertheless, Joséphine did not hear without distress that her husband had borrowed three hundred thousand francs upon his property. The apparent authenticity of the transaction, the rumors and conjectures spread through the town, forced Madame Claës, naturally much alarmed, to question her husband's notary and, disregarding her pride, to reveal to him her secret anxieties or let him guess them, and even ask her the humiliating question, —

"How is it that Monsieur Claës has not told you of this?"

Happily, the notary was almost a relation, — in this wise: The grandfather of Monsieur Claës had married

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a Pierquin of Antwerp, of the same family as the Pierquins of Douai. Since the marriage the latter, though strangers to the Claës, claimed them as cousins. Monsieur Pierquin, a young man twenty-six years of age, who had just succeeded to his father's practice, was the only person who now had access to the House of Claës.

Madame Balthazar had lived for several months in such complete solitude that the notary was obliged not only to confirm the rumor of the disasters, but to give her further particulars, which were now well known throughout the town. He told her it was probable that her husband owed considerable sums of money to the house which furnished him with chemicals. That house, after making inquiries as to the fortune and credit of Monsieur Claës, accepted all his orders and sent the supplies without hesitation, notwithstanding the heavy sums of money which became due. Madame Claës requested Pierquin to obtain the bill for all the chemicals that had been furnished to her husband.

Two months later, Messieurs Protez and Chiffreville, manufacturers of chemical products, sent in a schedule of accounts rendered, which amounted to over one hundred thousand francs. Madame Claës and Pierquin studied the document with an ever-increasing surprise. Though some articles, entered in commercial and scientific terms, were unintelligible to them, they were

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frightened to see entries of precious metals and diamonds of all kinds, though in small quantities. The large sum total of the debt was explained by the multiplicity of articles, by the precautions needed in transporting some of them, more especially valuable machinery, by the exorbitant price of certain rare chemicals, and finally by the cost of instruments made to order after the designs of Monsieur Claës himself.

The notary had made inquiries, in his client's interest, as to Messieurs Protez and Chiffreville, and found that their known integrity was sufficient guarantee as to the honesty of their operations with Monsieur Claës, to whom, moreover, they frequently sent information of results obtained by chemists in Paris, for the purpose of sparing him expense. Madame Claës begged the notary to keep the nature of these purchases from the knowledge of the people of Douai, lest they should declare the whole thing a mania; but Pierquin replied that he had already delayed to the very last moment the notarial deeds which the importance of the sum borrowed necessitated, in order not to lessen the respect in which Monsieur Claës was held. He then revealed the full extent of the evil, telling her plainly that if she could not find means to prevent her husband from thus madly making way with his property, in six months the patrimonial fortune of the Claës would be mortgaged to its full value. As for himself, he said,

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the remonstrances he had already made to his cousin, with all the consideration due to a man so justly respected, had been wholly unavailing. Balthazar had replied, once for all, that he was working for the fame and the fortune of his family.

Thus, to the tortures of the heart which Madame Claës had borne for two years — one following the other with cumulative suffering — was now added a dreadful and ceaseless fear which made the future terrifying. Women have presentiments whose accuracy is often marvellous. Why do they fear so much more than they hope in matters that concern the interests of this life? Why is their faith given only to religious ideas of a future existence? Why do they so ably foresee the catastrophes of fortune and the crises of fate? Perhaps the sentiment which unites them to the men they love gives them a sense by which they weigh force, measure faculties, understand tastes, passions, vices, virtues. The perpetual study of these causes in the midst of which they live gives them, no doubt, the fatal power of foreseeing effects in all possible relations of earthly life. What they see of the present enables them to judge of the future with an intuitive ability explained by the perfection of their nervous system, which allows them to seize the lightest indications of thought and feeling. Their whole being vibrates in communion with great moral convulsions. Either they feel, or they see.

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Now, although separated from her husband for over two years, Madame Claës foresaw the loss of their property. She fully understood the deliberate ardor, the well-considered, inalterable steadfastness of Balthazar; if it were indeed true that he was seeking to make gold, he was capable of throwing his last crust into the crucible with absolute indifference. But what was he really seeking? Up to this time maternal feeling and conjugal love had been so mingled in the heart of this woman that the children, equally beloved by husband and wife, had never come between them. Suddenly she found herself at times more mother than wife, though hitherto she had been more wife than mother. However ready she had been to sacrifice her fortune and even her children to the man who had chosen her, loved her, adored her, and to whom she was still the only woman in the world, the remorse she felt for the weakness of her maternal love threw her into terrible alternations of feeling. As a wife, she suffered in heart; as a mother, through her children; as a Christian, for all.

She kept silence, and hid the cruel struggle in her soul. Her husband, sole arbiter of the family fate, was the master by whose will it must be guided; he was responsible to God only. Besides, could she reproach him for the use he now made of his fortune, after the disinterestedness he had shown to her for many happy years? Was she to judge his purposes? And yet her

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conscience, in keeping with the spirit of the law, told her that parents were the depositaries and guardians of property, and possessed no right to alienate the material welfare of the children. To escape replying to such stern questions she preferred to shut her eyes, like one who refuses to see the abyss into whose depths he knows he is about to fall.

For more than six months her husband had given her no money for the household expenses. She sold secretly, in Paris, the handsome diamond ornaments her brother had given her on her marriage, and placed the family on a footing of the strictest economy. She sent away the governess of her children, and even the nurse of little Jean. Formerly the luxury of carriages and horses was unknown among the burgher families, so simple were they in their habits, so proud in their feelings; no provision for that modern innovation had therefore been made at the House of Claës, and Balthazar was obliged to have his stable and coachhouse in a building opposite to his own house: his present occupations allowed him no time to superintend that portion of his establishment, which belongs exclusively to men. Madame Claës suppressed the whole expense of equipages and servants, which her present isolation from the world rendered unnecessary, and she did so without pretending to conceal the retrenchment under any pretext. So far, facts had contradicted her

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assertions, and silence for the future was more becoming: indeed the change in the family mode of living called for no explanation in a country where, as in Flanders, any one who lives up to his income is considered a madman.

And yet, as her eldest daughter, Marguerite, approached her sixteenth birthday, Madame Claës longed to procure for her a good marriage, and to place her in society in a manner suitable to a daughter of the Molinas, the Van Ostrom-Temnincks, and the Casa-Réals. A few days before the one on which this story opens, the money derived from the sale of the diamonds had been exhausted. On the very day, at three o'clock in the afternoon, as Madame Claës was taking her children to vespers, she met Pierquin, who was on his way to see her, and who turned and accompanied her to the church, talking in a low voice of her situation.

"My dear cousin," he said, "unless I fail in the friendship which binds me to your family, I cannot conceal from you the peril of your position, or refrain from begging you to speak to your husband. Who but you can hold him back from the gulf into which he is plunging? The rents from the mortgaged estates are not enough to pay the interest on the sums he has borrowed. If he cuts the wood on them he destroys your last chance of safety in the future. My cousin Balthazar owes at this moment thirty thousand francs to the

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house of Protez and Chiffreville. How can you pay them? What will you live on? If Claës persists in sending for reagents, retorts, voltaic batteries, and other such playthings, what will become of you? Your whole property, except the house and furniture, has been dissipated in gas and carbon; yesterday he talked of mortgaging the house, and in answer to a remark of mine, he cried out, 'The devil!' It was the first sign of reason I have known him show for three years."

Madame Claës pressed the notary's arm, and said in a tone of suffering, "Keep it secret."

Overwhelmed by these plain words of startling clearness, the poor woman, pious as she was, could not pray; she sat still on her chair between her children, with her prayer-book open, but not turning its leaves; her mind was sunk in meditations as absorbing as those of her husband. The Spanish sense of honor, the Flemish integrity, resounded in her soul with a peal louder than any organ. The ruin of her children was accomplished! Between them and their father's honor she must no longer hesitate. The necessity of a coming struggle with her husband terrified her; in her eyes he was so great, so majestic, that the mere prospect of his anger made her tremble as at a vision of the divine wrath. She must now depart from the submission she had sacredly practised as a wife. The interests of her children compelled her to oppose, in his most cherished

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tastes, the man she idolized. Must she not daily force him back to common matters from the higher realms of Science; drag him forcibly from a smiling future and plunge him into a materialism hideous to artists and great men? To her, Balthazar Claës was a Titan of science, a man big with glory; he could only have forgotten her for the riches of a mighty hope. Then too, was he not profoundly wise? she had heard him talk with such good sense on every subject that he must be sincere when he declared he worked for the glory and prosperity of his family. His love for his wife and family was not only vast, it was infinite. That feeling could not be extinct; it was magnified, and reproduced in another form.

Noble, generous, timid as she was, she prepared herself to ring into the ears of this noble man the word and the sound of money, to show him the sores of poverty, and force him to hear cries of distress when he was listening only for the melodious voice of Fame. Perhaps his love for her would lessen! If she had had no children, she would bravely and joyously have welcomed the new destiny her husband was making for her. Women who are brought up in opulence are quick to feel the emptiness of material enjoyments; and when their hearts, more wearied than withered, have once learned the happiness of a constant interchange of real feelings, they feel no shrinking from reduced outward

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circumstances, provided they are still acceptable to the man who has loved them. Their wishes, their pleasures, are subordinated to the caprices of that other life outside of their own; to them the only dreadful future is to lose him.

At this moment, therefore, her children came between Pépita and her true life, just as Science had come between herself and Balthazar. And thus, when she reached home after vespers, and threw herself into the deep armchair before the window of the parlor, she sent away her children, directing them to keep perfectly quiet, and despatched a message to her husband, through Lemulquinier, saying that she wished to see him. But although the old valet did his best to make his master leave the laboratory, Balthazar scarcely heeded him. Madame Claës thus gained time for reflection. She sat thinking, paying no attention to the hour nor the light. The thought of owing thirty thousand francs that could not be paid renewed her past anguish and joined it to that of the present and the future. This influx of painful interests, ideas, and feelings overcame her, and she wept.

As Balthazar entered at last through the panelled door, the expression of his face seemed to her more dreadful, more absorbed, more distracted than she had yet seen it. When he made her no answer she was magnetized for a moment by the fixity of that blank

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look emptied of all expression, by the consuming ideas that issued as if distilled from that bald brow. Under the shock of this impression she wished to die. But when she heard the callous voice, uttering a scientific wish at the moment when her heart was breaking, her courage came back to her; she resolved to struggle with that awful power which had torn a lover from her arms, a father from her children, a fortune from their home, happiness from all. And yet she could not repress a trepidation which made her quiver; in all her life no such solemn scene as this had taken place. This dreadful moment — did it not virtually contain her future, and gather within it all the past?

Weak and timid persons, or those whose excessive sensibility magnifies the smallest difficulties of life, men who tremble involuntarily before the masters of their fate, can now, one and all, conceive the rush of thoughts that crowded into the brain of this woman, and the feelings under the weight of which her heart was crushed as her husband slowly crossed the room towards the garden-door. Most women know that agony of inward deliberation in which Madame Claës was writhing. Even one whose heart has been tried by nothing worse than the declaration to a husband of some extravagance, or a debt to a dress-maker, will understand how its pulses swell and quicken when the matter is one of life itself.

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A beautiful or graceful woman might have thrown herself at her husband's feet, might have called to her aid the attitudes of grief; but to Madame Claës the sense of physical defects only added to her fears. When she saw Balthazar about to leave the room, her impulse was to spring towards him; then a cruel thought restrained her — she should stand before him! would she not seem ridiculous in the eyes of a man no longer under the glamour of love — who might see true? She resolved to avoid all dangerous chances at so solemn a moment, and remained seated, saying in a clear voice,

"Balthazar."

He turned mechanically and coughed; then, paying no attention to his wife, he walked to one of the little square boxes that are placed at intervals along the wainscoting of every room in Holland and Belgium, and spat in it. This man, who took no thought of other persons, never forgot the inveterate habit of using those boxes. To poor Joséphine, unable to find a reason for this singularity, the constant care which her husband took of the furniture caused her at all times an unspeakable pang, but at this moment the pain was so violent that it put her beside herself and made her exclaim in a tone of impatience, which expressed her wounded feelings, —

"Monsieur, I am speaking to you!"

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"What does that mean?" answered Balthazar, turning quickly, and casting a look of reviving intelligence upon his wife, which fell upon her like a thunderbolt.

"Forgive me, my friend," she said, turning pale. She tried to rise and put out her hand to him, but her strength gave way and she fell back. "I am dying!" she cried in a voice choked by sobs.

At the sight Balthazar had, like all abstracted persons, a vivid reaction of mind; and he divined, so to speak, the secret cause of this attack. Taking Madame Claës at once in his arms, he opened the door upon the little antechamber, and ran so rapidly up the ancient wooden staircase that his wife's dress having caught on the jaws of one of the griffins that supported the balustrade, a whole breadth was torn off with a loud noise. He kicked in the door of the vestibule between their chambers, but the door of Joséphine's bedroom was locked.

He gently placed her on a chair, saying to himself, "My God! the key, where is the key?"

"Thank you, dear friend," said Madame Claës, opening her eyes. "This is the first time for a long, long while that I have been so near your heart."

"Good God!" cried Claës, "the key! — here come the servants."

Joséphine signed to him to take a key that hung from a ribbon at her waist. After opening the door,

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Balthazar laid his wife on a sofa, and left the room to stop the frightened servants from coming up by giving them orders to serve the dinner; he then went back to Madame Claës.

"What is it, my dear life?" he said, sitting down beside her, and taking her hand and kissing it.

"Nothing — now," she answered. "I suffer no longer. Only, I would I had the power of God to pour all the gold of the world at thy feet."

"Why gold?" he asked. He took her in his arms, pressed her to him and kissed her once more upon the forehead. "Do you not give me the greatest of all riches in loving me as you do love me, my dear and precious wife?"

"Oh! my Balthazar, will you not drive away the anguish of our lives as your voice now drives out the misery of my heart? At last, at last, I see that you are still the same."

"What anguish do you speak of, dear?"

"My friend, we are ruined."

"Ruined!" he repeated. Then, with a smile, he stroked her hand, holding it within his own, and said in his tender voice, so long unheard: "To-morrow, dear love, our wealth may perhaps be limitless. Yesterday, in searching for a far more important secret, I think I found the means of crystallizing carbon, the substance of the diamond. Oh, my dear wife! in a few

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days' time you will forgive me all my forgetfulness — I am forgetful sometimes, am I not? Was I not harsh to you just now? Be indulgent for a man who never ceases to think of you, whose toils are full of you — of us."

"Enough, enough!" she said, "let us talk of it all to-night, dear friend. I suffered from too much grief, and now I suffer from too much joy."

"To-night," he resumed; "yes, willingly: we will talk of it. If I fall into meditation, remind me of this promise. To-night I desire to leave my work, my researches, and return to family joys, to the delights of the heart — Pépita, I need them, I thirst for them!"

"You will tell me what it is you seek, Balthazar?"

"Poor child, you cannot understand it."

"You think so? Ah! my friend, listen; for nearly four months I have studied chemistry that I might talk of it with you. I have read Fourcroy, Lavoisier, Chaptal, Nollet, Rouelle, Berthollet, Gay-Lussac, Spallanzani, Leuwenhoëk, Galvani, Volta, — in fact, all the books about the science you worship. You can tell me your secrets, I shall understand you."

"Oh! you are indeed an angel," cried Balthazar, falling at her feet, and shedding tears of tender feeling that made her quiver. "Yes, we will understand each other in all things."

"Ah!" she cried, "I would throw myself into those hellish fires which heat your furnaces to hear these

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words from your lips and to see you thus." Then, hearing her daughter's step in the anteroom, she sprang quickly forward. "What is it, Marguerite?" she said to her eldest daughter.

"My dear mother, Monsieur Pierquin has just come. If he stays to dinner we need some table-linen; you forgot to give it out this morning."

Madame Claës drew from her pocket a bunch of small keys and gave them to the young girl, pointing to the mahogany closets which lined the ante-chamber as she said:

"My daughter, take a set of the Graindorge linen; it is on your right."

"Since my dear Balthazar comes back to me, let the return be complete," she said, re-entering her chamber with a soft and arch expression upon her face. "My friend, go into your own room; do me the kindness to dress for dinner, Pierquin will be with us. Come, take off this ragged clothing; see those stains! Is it muriatic or sulphuric acid which left these yellow edges to the holes? Make yourself young again, — I will send you Mulquinier as soon as I have changed my dress."

Balthazar attempted to pass through the door of communication, forgetting that it was locked on his side. He went out through the anteroom.

"Marguerite, put the linen on a chair, and come and help me dress; I don't want Martha," said Madame Claës, calling her daughter.

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Balthazar had caught Marguerite and turned her towards him with a joyous action, exclaiming: "Good-evening, my child; how pretty you are in your muslin gown and that pink sash!" Then he kissed her forehead and pressed her hand.

"Mamma, papa has kissed me!" cried Marguerite, running into her mother's room. "He seems so joyous, so happy!"

"My child, your father is a great man; for three years he has toiled for the fame and fortune of his family: he thinks he has attained the object of his search. This day is a festival for us all."

"My dear mamma," replied Marguerite, "we shall not be alone in our joy, for the servants have been so grieved to see him unlike himself. Oh! put on another sash, this is faded."

"So be it; but make haste, I want to speak to Pierquin. Where is he?"

"In the parlor, playing with Jean."

"Where are Gabriel and Félicie?"

"I hear them in the garden."

"Run down quickly and see that they do not pick the tulips; your father has not seen them in flower this year, and he may take a fancy to look at them after dinner. Tell Mulquinier to go up and assist your father in dressing."

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V.

As Marguerite left the room, Madame Claës glanced at the children through the windows of her chamber, which looked on the garden, and saw that they were watching one of those insects with shining wings spotted with gold, commonly called "darning-needles."

"Be good, my darlings," she said, raising the lower sash of the window and leaving it up to air the room. Then she knocked gently on the door of communication, to assure herself that Balthazar had not fallen into abstraction. He opened it, and seeing him half-dressed, she said in joyous tones: —

"You won't leave me long with Pierquin, will you? Come as soon as you can."

Her step was so light as she descended that a listener would never have supposed her lame.

"When monsieur carried madame upstairs," said the old valet, whom she met on the staircase, "he tore this bit out of her dress, and he broke the jaw of that griffin; I'm sure I don't know who can put it on again. There's our staircase ruined — and it used to be so handsome!"

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"Never mind, my poor Mulquinier; don't have it mended at all — it is not a misfortune," said his mistress.

"What can have happened?" thought Lemulquinier; "why is n't it a misfortune, I should like to know? has the master found the Absolute?"

"Good-evening, Monsieur Pierquin," said Madame Claës, opening the parlor door.

The notary rushed forward to give her his arm; as she never took any but that of her husband she thanked him with a smile and said, —

"Have you come for the thirty thousand francs?"

"Yes, madame; when I reached home I found a letter of advice from Messieurs Protez and Chiffreville, who have drawn six letters of exchange upon Monsieur Claës for five thousand francs each."

"Well, say nothing to Balthazar to-day," she replied. "Stay and dine with us. If he happens to ask why you came, find some plausible pretext, I entreat you. Give me the letter. I will speak to him myself about it. All is well," she added, noticing the lawyer's surprise. "In a few months my husband will probably pay off all the sums he has borrowed."

Hearing these words, which were said in a low voice, the notary looked at Mademoiselle Claës, who was entering the room from the garden followed by Gabriel and Félicie, and remarked, —

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"I have never seen Mademoiselle Marguerite as pretty as she is at this moment."

Madame Claës, who was sitting in her armchair with little Jean upon her lap, raised her head and looked at her daughter, and then at the notary, with a pretended air of indifference.

Pierquin was a man of middle height, neither stout nor thin, with vulgar good looks, a face that expressed vexation rather than melancholy, and a pensive habit in which there was more of indecision than thought. People called him a misanthrope, but he was too eager after his own interests, and too extortionate towards others to have set up a genuine divorce from the world. His indifferent demeanor, his affected silence, his habitual custom of looking, as it were, into the void, seemed to indicate depth of character, while in fact they merely concealed the shallow insignificance of a notary busied exclusively with earthly interests; though he was still young enough to feel envy. To marry into the family of Claës would have been to him an object of extreme desire, if an instinct of avarice had not underlain it. He could seem generous, but for all that he was a keen reckoner. And thus, without explaining to himself the motive for his change of manner, his behavior was harsh, peremptory, and surly, like that of an ordinary business man, when he thought the Claës were ruined; accommodating, affectionate, and almost servile, when

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he saw reason to believe in a happy issue to his cousin's labors. Sometimes he beheld an infanta in Marguerite Claës, to whom no provincial notary might aspire; then he regarded her as any poor girl too happy if he deigned to make her his wife. He was a true provincial, and a Fleming; without malevolence, not devoid of devotion and kindheartedness, but led by a naïve selfishness which rendered all his better qualities incomplete, while certain absurdities of manner spoiled his personal appearance.

Madame Claës recollected the curt tone in which the notary had spoken to her that afternoon in the porch of the church, and she took note of the change which her present reply had wrought in his demeanor; she guessed its meaning and tried to read her daughter's mind by a penetrating glance, seeking to discover if she thought of her cousin; but the young girl's manner showed complete indifference.

After a few moments spent in general conversation on the current topics of the day, the master of the house came down from his bedroom, where his wife had heard with inexpressible delight the creaking sound of his boots as he trod the floor. The step was that of a young and active man, and foretold so complete a transformation, that the mere expectation of his appearance made Madame Claës quiver as he descended the stairs. Balthazar entered, dressed in the fashion of the period

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He wore highly polished top-boots, which allowed the upper part of the white silk stockings to appear, blue kerseymere small-clothes with gold buttons, a flowered white waistcoat, and a blue frock-coat. He had trimmed his beard, combed and perfumed his hair, pared his nails, and washed his hands, all with such care that he was scarcely recognizable to those who had seen him lately. Instead of an old man almost decrepit, his children, his wife, and the notary saw a Balthazar Claës who was forty years old, and whose courteous and affable presence was full of its former attractions. The weariness and suffering betrayed by the thin face and the clinging of the skin to the bones, had in themselves a sort of charm.

"Good-evening, Pierquin," said Monsieur Claës.

Once more a husband and a father, he took his youngest child from his wife's lap and tossed him in the air.

"See that little fellow!" he exclaimed to the notary. "Does n't such a pretty creature make you long to marry? Take my word for it, my dear Pierquin, family happiness consoles a man for everything. Up, up!" he cried, tossing Jean in the air; "down, down! up! down!"

The child laughed with all his heart as he went alternately to the ceiling and down to the carpet. The mother turned away her eyes that she might not betray

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the emotion which the simple play caused her, — simple apparently, but to her a domestic revolution.

"Let me see how you can walk," said Balthazar, putting his son on the floor and throwing himself on a sofa near his wife.

The child ran to its father, attracted by the glitter of the gold buttons which fastened the breeches just above the slashed tops of his boots.

"You are a darling!" cried Balthazar, kissing him; "you are a Claës, you walk straight. Well, Gabriel, how is Père Morillon?" he said to his eldest son, taking him by the ear and twisting it. "Are you struggling valiantly with your themes and your construing? have you taken sharp hold of mathematics?"

Then he rose, and went up to the notary with the affectionate courtesy that characterized him.

"My dear Pierquin," he said, "perhaps you have something to say to me." He took his arm to lead him to the garden, adding, "Come and see my tulips."

Madame Claës looked at her husband as he left the room, unable to repress the joy she felt in seeing him once more so young, so affable, so truly himself. She rose, took her daughter round the waist and kissed her, exclaiming: —

"My dear Marguerite, my darling child! I love you better than ever to-day."

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"It is long since I have seen my father so kind," answered the young girl.

Lemulquinier announced dinner. To prevent Pierquin from offering her his arm, Madame Claës took that of her husband and led the way into the next room, the whole family following.

The dining-room, whose ceiling was supported by beams and decorated with paintings cleaned and restored every year, was furnished with tall oaken sideboards and buffets, on whose shelves stood many a curious piece of family china. The walls were hung with violet leather, on which designs of game and other hunting objects were stamped in gold. Carefully arranged here and there above the shelves, shone the brilliant plumage of strange birds, and the lustre of rare shells. The chairs, which evidently had not been changed since the beginning of the sixteenth century, showed the square shape with twisted columns and the low back covered with a fringed stuff, common to that period, and glorified by Raphael in his picture of the Madonna della Sedia. The wood of these chairs was now black, but the gilt nails shone as if new, and the stuff, carefully renewed from time to time, was of an admirable shade of red.

The whole life of Flanders with its Spanish innovations was in this room. The decanters and flasks on the dinner-table, with their graceful antique lines and

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swelling curves, had an air of respectability. The glasses were those old goblets with stems and feet which may be seen in the pictures of the Dutch or Flemish school. The dinner-service of faïence, decorated with raised colored figures, in the manner of Bernard Palissy, came from the English manufactory of Wedgwood. The silver-ware was massive, with square sides and designs in high relief, — genuine family plate, whose pieces, in every variety of form, fashion, and chasing, showed the beginnings of prosperity and the progress towards fortune of the Claës family. The napkins were fringed, a fashion altogether Spanish; and as for the linen, it will readily be supposed that the Claës's household made it a point of honor to possess the best.

All this service of the table, silver, linen, and glass, were for the daily use of the family. The front house, where the social entertainments were given, had its own especial luxury, whose marvels, being reserved for great occasions, wore an air of dignity often lost to things which are, as it were, made common by daily use. Here, in the home quarter, everything bore the impress of patriarchal use and simplicity. And — for a final and delightful detail — a vine grew outside the house between the windows, whose tendrilled branches twined about the casements.

"You are faithful to the old traditions, madame," said Pierquin, as he received a plate of that celebrated

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thyme soup in which the Dutch and Flemish cooks put little force-meat balls and dice of fried bread. "This is the Sunday soup of our forefathers. Your house and that of my uncle des Raquets are the only ones where we still find this historic soup of the Netherlands. Ah! pardon me, old Monsieur Savaron de Savarus of Tournai makes it a matter of pride to keep up the custom; but everywhere else old Flanders is disappearing. Now-a-days everything is changing; furniture is made from Greek models; wherever you go you see helmets, lances, shields, and bows and arrows! Everybody is rebuilding his house, selling his old furniture, melting up his silver dishes, or exchanging them for Sèvres porcelain, — which does not compare with either old Dresden or with Chinese ware. Oh! as for me, I'm Flemish to the core; my heart actually bleeds to see the coppersmiths buying up our beautiful inlaid furniture for the mere value of the wood and the metal. The fact is, society wants to change its skin. Everything is being sacrificed, even the old methods of art. When people insist on going so fast, nothing is conscientiously done. During my last visit to Paris I was taken to see the pictures in the Louvre. On my word of honor, they are mere screen-painting, — no depth, no atmosphere; the painters were actually afraid to put colors on their canvas. And it is they who talk of overturning our ancient school of art! Ah, bah! —"

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"Our old masters," replied Balthazar, "studied the combination of colors and their endurance by submitting them to the action of sun and rain. You are right enough, however; the material resources of art are less cultivated in these days than formerly."

Madame Claës was not listening to the conversation. The notary's remark that porcelain dinner-services were now the fashion, gave her the brilliant idea of selling a quantity of heavy silver-ware which she had inherited from her brother, — hoping to be able thus to pay off the thirty thousand francs which her husband owed.

"Ha! ha!" Balthazar was saying to Pierquin when Madame Claës's mind returned to the conversation, "so they are discussing my work in Douai, are they?"

"Yes," replied the notary, "every one is asking what it is you spend so much money on. Only yesterday I heard the chief-justice deploring that a man like you should be searching for the Philosopher's stone. I ventured to reply that you were too wise not to know that such a scheme was attempting the impossible, too much of a Christian to take God's work out of his hands; and, like every other Claës, too good a business man to spend your money for such befooling quackeries. Still, I admit that I share the regret people feel at your absence from society. You might as well not live here at all. Really, madame, you would

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have been delighted had you heard the praises showered on Monsieur Claës and on you."

"You acted like a faithful friend in repelling imputations whose least evil is to make me ridiculous," said Balthazar. "Ha! so they think me ruined? Well, my dear Pierquin, two months hence I shall give a fête in honor of my wedding-day whose magnificence will get me back the respect my dear townsmen bestow on wealth."

Madame Claës colored deeply. For two years the anniversary had been forgotten. Like madmen whose faculties shine at times with unwonted brilliancy, Balthazar was never more gracious and delightful in his tenderness than at this moment. He was full of attention to his children, and his conversation had the charms of grace, and wit, and pertinence. This return of fatherly feeling, so long absent, was certainly the truest fête he could give his wife, for whom his looks and words expressed once more that unbroken sympathy of heart for heart which reveals to each a delicious oneness of sentiment.

Old Lemulquinier seemed to renew his youth; he came and went about the table with unusual liveliness, caused by the accomplishment of his secret hopes. The sudden change in his master's ways was even more significant to him than to Madame Claës. Where the family saw happiness he saw fortune. While helping

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Balthazar in his experiments he had grown to share his beliefs. Whether he really understood the drift of his master's researches from certain exclamations which escaped the chemist when expected results disappointed him, or whether the innate tendency of mankind towards imitation made him adopt the ideas of the man in whose atmosphere he lived, certain it is that Lemulquinier had conceived for his master a superstitious feeling that was a mixture of terror, admiration, and selfishness. The laboratory was to him what a lottery-office is to the masses, — organized hope. Every night he went to bed saying to himself, "To-morrow we may float in gold;" and every morning he woke with a faith as firm as that of the night before.

His name proved that his origin was wholly Flemish. In former days the lower classes were known by some name or nickname derived from their trades, their surroundings, their physical conformation, or their moral qualities. This name became the patronymic of the burgher family which each established as soon as he obtained his freedom. Sellers of linen thread were called in Flanders "*mulquiniers;*" and that no doubt was the trade of the particular ancestor of the old valet who passed from a state of serfdom to one of burgher dignity, until some unknown misfortune had again reduced his present descendant to the condition of a serf, with the addition of wages. The whole history of

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Flanders and its linen-trade was epitomized in this old man, often called, by way of euphony, Mulquinier. He was not without originality, either of character or appearance. His face was triangular in shape, broad and long, and seamed by small-pox which had left innumerable white and shining patches that gave him a fantastic appearance. He was tall and thin; his whole demeanor solemn and mysterious; and his small eyes, yellow as the wig which was smoothly plastered on his head, cast none but oblique glances.

The old valet's outward man was in keeping with the feeling of curiosity which he everywhere inspired. His position as assistant to his master, the depositary of a secret jealously guarded and about which he maintained a rigid silence, invested him with a species of charm. The denizens of the rue de Paris watched him pass with an interest mingled with awe; to all their questions he returned sibylline answers big with mysterious treasures. Proud of being necessary to his master, he assumed an annoying authority over his companions, employing it to further his own interests and compel a submission which made him virtually the ruler of the house. Contrary to the custom of Flemish servants, who are deeply attached to the families whom they serve, Mulquinier cared only for Balthazar. If any trouble befel Madame Claës, or any joyful event happened to the family, he ate his

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bread and butter and drank his beer as phlegmatically as ever.

Dinner over, Madame Claës proposed that coffee should be served in the garden, by the bed of tulips which adorned the centre of it. The earthenware pots in which the bulbs were grown (the name of each flower being engraved on slate labels) were sunk in the ground and so arranged as to form a pyramid, at the summit of which rose a certain dragon's-head tulip which Balthazar alone possessed. This flower, named *tulipa Claësiana*, combined the seven colors; and the curved edges of each petal looked as though they were gilt. Balthazar's father, who had frequently refused ten thousand florins for this treasure, took such precautions against the theft of a single seed that he kept the plant always in the parlor and often spent whole days in contemplating it. The stem was enormous, erect, firm, and admirably green; the proportions of the plant were in harmony with the proportions of the flower, whose seven colors were distinguishable from each other with the clearly defined brilliancy which formerly gave such fabulous value to these dazzling plants.

"Here you have at least thirty or forty thousand francs' worth of tulips," said the notary, looking alternately at Madame Claës and at the many-colored pyramid. The former was too enthusiastic over the beauty of the flowers, which the setting sun was just then

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transforming into jewels, to observe the meaning of the notary's words.

"What good do they do you?" continued Pierquin, addressing Balthazar; "you ought to sell them."

"Bah! am I in want of money?" replied Claës, in the tone of a man to whom forty thousand francs was a matter of no consequence.

There was a moment's silence, during which the children made many exclamations.

"See this one, mamma!"

"Oh! here's a beauty!"

"Tell me the name of that one!"

"What a gulf for human reason to sound!" cried Balthazar, raising his hands and clasping them with a gesture of despair. "A compound of hydrogen and oxygen gives off, according to their relative proportions, under the same conditions and by the same principle, these manifold colors, each of which constitutes a distinct result."

His wife heard the words of his proposition, but it was uttered so rapidly that she did not seize its exact meaning; and Balthazar, as if remembering that she had studied his favorite science, made her a mysterious sign, saying, —

"You do not yet understand me, but you will."

Then he apparently fell back into the absorbed meditation now habitual to him.

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"No, I am sure you do not understand him," said Pierquin, taking his coffee from Marguerite's hand. "The Ethiopian can't change his skin, nor the leopard his spots," he whispered to Madame Claës. "Have the goodness to remonstrate with him later; the devil himself could n't draw him out of his cogitation now; he is in it for to-day, at any rate."

So saying, he bade good-by to Claës, who pretended not to hear him, kissed little Jean in his mother's arms, and retired with a low bow.

When the street-door clanged behind him, Balthazar caught his wife round the waist, and put an end to the uneasiness his feigned revery was causing her by whispering in her ear, —

"I knew how to get rid of him."

Madame Claës turned her face to her husband, not ashamed to let him see the tears of happiness that filled her eyes: then she rested her forehead against his shoulder and let little Jean slide to the floor.

"Let us go back into the parlor," she said, after a pause.

Balthazar was exuberantly gay throughout the evening. He invented games for the children, and played with such zest himself that he did not notice two or three short absences made by his wife. About half-past nine, when Jean had gone to bed, Marguerite returned to the parlor after helping her sister Félicie

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to undress, and found her mother seated in the deep armchair, and her father holding his wife's hand as he talked to her. The young girl feared to disturb them, and was about to retire without speaking, when Madame Claës caught sight of her, and said: —

"Come in, Marguerite; come here, dear child." She drew her down, kissed her tenderly on the forehead, and added, "Carry your book into your own room; but do not sit up too late."

"Good-night, my darling daughter," said Balthazar.

Marguerite kissed her father and mother and went away. Husband and wife remained alone for some minutes without speaking, watching the last glimmer of the twilight as it faded from the trees in the garden, whose outlines were scarcely discernible through the gathering darkness. When night had almost fallen, Balthazar said to his wife in a voice of emotion, —

"Let us go upstairs."

Long before English manners and customs had consecrated the wife's chamber as a sacred spot, that of a Flemish woman was impenetrable. The good housewives of the Low Countries did not make it a symbol of virtue. It was to them a habit contracted from childhood, a domestic superstition, rendering the bedroom a delightful sanctuary of tender feelings, where simplicity blended with all that was most sweet and sacred in

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social life. Any woman in Madame Claës's position would have wished to gather about her the elegances of life, but Joséphine had done so with exquisite taste, knowing well how great an influence the aspect of our surroundings exerts upon the feelings of others. To a pretty creature it would have been mere luxury, to her it was a necessity. No one better understood the meaning of the saying, "A pretty woman is self-created," — a maxim which guided every action of Napoleon's first wife, and often made her false; whereas Madame Claës was ever natural and true.

Though Balthazar knew his wife's chamber well, his forgetfulness of material things had lately been so complete that he felt a thrill of soft emotion when he entered it, as though he saw it for the first time. The proud gayety of a triumphant woman glowed in the splendid colors of the tulips which rose from the long throats of Chinese vases judiciously placed about the room, and sparkled in the profusion of lights whose effect can only be compared to a joyous burst of martial music. The gleam of the wax candles cast a mellow sheen on the coverings of pearl-gray silk, whose monotony was relieved by touches of gold, soberly distributed here and there on a few ornaments, and by the varied colors of the tulips, which were like sheaves of precious stones. The secret of this choice arrangement — it was he, ever he! Joséphine could not tell him in words more

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eloquent that he was now and ever the mainspring of her joys and woes.

The aspect of that chamber put the soul deliciously at ease, cast out sad thoughts, and left a sense of pure and equable happiness. The silken coverings, brought from China, gave forth a soothing perfume that penetrated the system without fatiguing it. The curtains, carefully drawn, betrayed a desire for solitude, a jealous intention of guarding the sound of every word, of hiding every look of the reconquered husband. Madame Claës, wearing a dressing-robe of muslin, which was trimmed by a long pelerine with falls of lace that came about her throat, and adorned with her beautiful black hair, which was exquisitely glossy and fell on either side her forehead like a raven's wing, went to draw the tapestry portière that hung before the door and allowed no sound to penetrate the chamber from without.

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VI.

At the doorway Joséphine turned, and threw to her husband, who was sitting near the chimney, one of those gay smiles with which a sensitive woman whose soul comes at moments into her face, rendering it beautiful, gives expression to irresistible hopes. Woman's greatest charm lies in her constant appeal to the generosity of man by the admission of a weakness which stirs his pride and wakens him to the nobler sentiments. Is not such an avowal of weakness full of magical seduction? When the rings of the portière had slipped with a muffled sound along the wooden rod, she turned towards Claës, and made as though she would hide her physical defects by resting her hand upon a chair and drawing herself gracefully forward. It was calling him to help her. Balthazar, sunk for a moment in contemplation of the olive-tinted head, which attracted and satisfied the eye as it stood out in relief against the soft gray background, rose to take his wife in his arms and carry her to her sofa. This was what she wanted.

"You promised me," she said, taking his hand which she held between her own magnetic palms, "to tell me

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the secret of your researches. Admit, dear friend, that I am worthy to know it, since I have had the courage to study a science condemned by the Church that I might be able to understand you. I am curious; hide nothing from me. Tell me first how it happened that you rose one morning anxious and oppressed, when over night I had left you happy."

"Is it to hear me talk of chemistry that you have made yourself so coquettishly delightful?"

"Dear friend, a confidence which puts me in your inner heart is the greatest of all pleasures for me; is it not a communion of souls which gives birth to the highest happiness of earth? Your love comes back to me not lessened, pure; I long to know what dream has had the power to keep it from me so long. Yes, I am more jealous of a thought than of all the women in the world. Love is vast, but it is not infinite, while Science has depths unfathomed, to which I will not let you go alone. I hate all that comes between us. If you win the glory for which you strive, I must be unhappy; it will bring you joy, while I — I alone — should be the giver of your happiness."

"No, my angel, it was not an idea, not a thought; it was a man that first led me into this glorious path."

"A man!" she cried in terror.

"Do you remember, Pépita, the Polish officer who stayed with us in 1809?"

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"Do I remember him!" she exclaimed; "I am often annoyed because my memory still recalls those eyes, like tongues of fire darting from coals of hell, those hollows above the eyebrows, that broad skull stripped of hair, the upturned moustache, the angular, worn face! — What awful impassiveness in his bearing! Ah! surely if there had been a room in any inn I would never have allowed him to sleep here."

"That Polish gentleman," resumed Balthazar, "was named Adam de Wierzchownia. When you left us alone that evening in the parlor, we happened by chance to speak of chemistry. Compelled by poverty to give up the study of that science, he had become a soldier. It was, I think, by means of a glass of sugared water that we recognized each other as adepts. When I ordered Mulquinier to bring the sugar in pieces, the captain gave a start of surprise. 'Have you studied chemistry?' he asked. 'With Lavoisier,' I answered. 'You are happy in being rich and free,' he cried; then from the depths of his bosom came the sigh of a man, — one of those sighs which reveal a hell of anguish hidden in the brain or in the heart, a something ardent, concentrated, not to be expressed in words. He ended his sentence with a look that startled me. After a pause, he told me that Poland being at her last gasp he had taken refuge in Sweden. There he had sought consolation for his country's fate in the

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study of chemistry, for which he had always felt an irresistible vocation. 'And I see you recognize as I do,' he added, 'that gum arabic, sugar, and starch, reduced to powder, each yield a substance absolutely similar, with, when analyzed, the same qualitative result.'

"He paused again; and then, after examining me with a searching eye, he said confidentially, in a low voice, certain grave words whose general meaning alone remains fixed on my memory; but he spoke with a force of tone, with fervid inflections, with an energy of gesture, which stirred my very vitals, and struck my imagination as the hammer strikes the anvil. I will tell you briefly the arguments he used, which were to me like the live coal laid by the Almighty upon Isaiah's tongue; for my studies with Lavoisier enabled me to understand their full bearing.

"'Monsieur,' he said, 'the parity of these three substances, in appearance so distinct, led me to think that all the productions of nature ought to have a single principle. The researches of modern chemistry prove the truth of this law in the larger part of natural effects. Chemistry divides creation into two distinct parts, — organic nature, and inorganic nature. Organic nature, comprising as it does all animal and vegetable creations which show an organization more or less perfect, — or, to be more exact, a greater or lesser

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motive power, which gives more or less sensibility, — is, undoubtedly, the more important part of our earth. Now, analysis has reduced all the products of this nature to four simple substances, namely: three gases, nitrogen, hydrogen, and oxygen, and another simple substance, non-metallic and solid, carbon. Inorganic nature, on the contrary, so simple, devoid of movement and sensation, denied the power of growth (too hastily accorded to it by Linnæus), possesses fifty-three simple substances, or elements, whose different combinations make its products. Is it probable that means should be more numerous where a lesser number of results are produced?

"'My master's opinion was that these fifty-three primary bodies have one originating principle, acted upon in the past by some force the knowledge of which has perished to-day, but which human genius ought to rediscover. Well, then, suppose that this force does live and act again; we have chemical unity. Organic and inorganic nature would apparently then rest on four essential principles, — in fact, if we could decompose nitrogen which we ought to consider a negation, we should have but three. This brings us at once close upon the great Ternary of the ancients and of the alchemists of the Middle Ages, whom we do wrong to scorn. Modern chemistry is nothing more than that. It is much, and yet little, — much, because the science has never recoiled

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before difficulty; little, in comparison with what remains to be done. Chance has served her well, my noble Science! Is not that tear of crystallized pure carbon, the diamond, seemingly the last substance possible to create? The old alchemists, who thought that gold was decomposable and therefore creatable, shrank from the idea of producing the diamond. Yet we have discovered the nature and the law of its composition.

"'As for me,' he continued, 'I have gone farther still. An experiment proved to me that the mysterious Ternary, which has occupied the human mind from time immemorial, will not be found by physical analyses, which lack direction to a fixed point. I will relate, in the first place, the experiment itself.

"'Sow cress-seed (to take one among the many substances of organic nature) in flour of brimstone (to take another simple substance). Sprinkle the seed with distilled water, that no unknown element may reach the product of the germination. The seed germinates, and sprouts from a known environment, and feeds only on elements known by analysis. Cut off the stalks from time to time, till you get a sufficient quantity to produce after burning them enough ashes for the experiment. Well, by analyzing those ashes, you will obtain silicic acid, aluminium, phosphate and carbonate of lime, carbonate of magnesia, the sulphate and carbonate of potassium, and oxide of iron, precisely as if the

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cress had grown in ordinary earth, beside a brook. Now, those elements did not exist in the brimstone, a simple substance which served for soil to the cress, nor in the distilled water with which the plant was nourished, whose composition was known. But since they are no more to be found in the seed itself, we can explain their presence in the plant only by assuming the existence of a primary element common to all the substances contained in the cress, and also to all those by which we environed it. Thus the air, the distilled water, the brimstone, and the various elements which analysis finds in the cress, namely, potash, lime, magnesia, aluminium, etc., should have one common principle floating in the atmosphere like light of the sun.

"'From this unimpeachable experiment,' he cried, 'I deduce the existence of the Alkahest, the Absolute, — a substance common to all created things, differentiated by one primary force. Such is the net meaning and position of the problem of the Absolute, which appears to me to be solvable. In it we find the mysterious Ternary, before whose shrine humanity has knelt from the dawn of ages, — the primary matter, the medium, the product. We find that terrible number THREE in all things human. It governs religions, sciences, and laws.

"'It was at this point,' he went on, 'that poverty put an end to my researches. You were the pupil of

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Lavoisier, you are rich, and master of your own time; I will therefore tell you my conjectures. Listen to the conclusions my personal experiments have led me to foresee. The PRIME MATTER must be the common principle in the three gases and in carbon. The MEDIUM must be the principle common to negative and positive electricity. Proceed to the discovery of the proofs that will establish those two truths; you will then find the explanation of all phenomenal existence.

"'Oh, monsieur!' he cried, striking his brow, 'when I know that I carry here the last word of Creation, when intuitively I perceive the Unconditioned, is it *living* to be dragged hither and thither in the ruck of men who fly at each other's throats at the word of command without knowing what they are doing? My actual life is an inverted dream. My body comes and goes and acts; it moves amid bullets, and cannon, and men; it crosses Europe at the will of a power I obey and yet despise. My soul has no consciousness of these acts; it is fixed, immovable, plunged in one idea, rapt in that idea, the Search for the Alkahest, — for that principle by which seeds that are absolutely alike, growing in the same environments, produce, some a white, others a yellow flower. The same phenomenon is seen in silkworms fed from the same leaves, and apparently constituted exactly alike, — one produces yellow silk, another white; and if we come to man himself, we

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find that children often resemble neither father nor mother. The logical deduction from this fact surely involves the explanation of all the phenomena of nature.

"'Ah, what can be more in harmony with our ideas of God than to believe he created all things by the simplest method? The Pythagorean worship of ONE, from which come all other numbers, and which represents Primal Matter; that of the number Two, the first aggregation and the type of all the rest; that of the number THREE, which throughout all time has symbolized God, — that is to say, Matter, Force, and Product, — are they not an echo, lingering along the ages, of some confused knowledge of the Absolute? Stahl, Becker, Paracelsus, Agrippa, all the great Searchers into occult causes took the Great Triad for their watchword, — in other words, the Ternary. Ignorant men who despise alchemy, that transcendent chemistry, are not aware that our work is only carrying onward the passionate researches of those great men. Had I found the Absolute, the Unconditioned, I meant to have grappled with Motion. Ah! while I am swallowing gunpowder and leading men uselessly to their death, my former master is piling discovery upon discovery! he is soaring towards the Absolute, while I — I shall die like a dog in the trenches!'

"When this poor grand man recovered his composure, he said, in a touching tone of brotherhood, 'If I

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see cause for a great experiment I will bequeath it to you before I die.'—My Pépita," cried Balthazar, taking his wife's hands, "tears of anguish rolled down his hollow cheeks, as he cast into my soul the fiery arguments that Lavoisier had timidly recognized without daring to follow them out—"

"Oh!" cried Madame Claës, unable to refrain from interrupting her husband, "that man, passing one night under our roof, was able to deprive us of your love, to destroy with a phrase, a word, the happiness of a family! Oh, my dear Balthazar, did he make the sign of the cross? did you examine him? The Tempter alone could have had that flaming eye which sent forth the fire of Prometheus. Yes, none but the Devil could have torn you from me. From that day you have been neither husband, nor father, nor master of your family."

"What!" exclaimed Balthazar, springing to his feet and casting a piercing glance at his wife, "do you blame your husband for rising above the level of other men that he may lay at your feet the divine purple of his glory, as a paltry offering in exchange for the treasures of your heart! Ah, my Pépita," he cried, "you do not know what I have done. In these three years I have made giant strides—"

His face seemed to his wife at this moment more transfigured under the fires of genius than she had ever

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seen it under the fires of love; and she wept as she listened to him.

"I have combined chlorine and nitrogen; I have decomposed many substances hitherto considered simple; I have discovered new metals. Why!" he continued, noticing that his wife wept, "I have even decomposed tears. Tears contain a little phosphate of lime, chloride of sodium, mucin, and water."

He went on speaking, without observing the spasm of pain that contracted Joséphine's features; he was again astride of Science, which bore him with outspread wings far away from material existence.

"This analysis, my dear," he went on, "is one of the most convincing proofs of the theory of the Absolute. All life involves combustion. According to the greater or the lesser activity of the fire on its hearth is life more or less enduring. In like manner, the destruction of mineral bodies is indefinitely retarded, because in their case combustion is nominal, latent, or imperceptible. In like manner, again, vegetables, which are constantly revived by combinations producing dampness, live indefinitely; in fact, we still possess certain vegetables which existed before the period of the last cataclysm. But each time that nature has perfected an organism and then, for some unknown reason, has introduced into it sensation, instinct, or intelligence (three marked stages of the organic system),

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these three agencies necessitate a combustion whose activity is in direct proportion to the result obtained. Man, who represents the highest point of intelligence, and who offers us the only organism by which we arrive at a power that is semi-creative — namely, THOUGHT — is, among all zoölogical creations, the one in which combustion is found in its most intense degree; whose powerful effects may in fact be seen to some extent in the phosphates, sulphates, and carbonates which man's body reveals to our analysis. May not these substances be traces left within him of the passage of the electric fluid which is the principle of all fertilization? Would not electricity manifest itself by a greater variety of compounds in him than in any other animal? Should not he have faculties above those of all other created beings for the purpose of absorbing fuller portions of the Absolute principle? and may he not assimilate that principle so as to produce, in some more perfect mechanism, his force and his ideas? I think so. Man is a retort. In my judgment, the brain of an idiot contains too little phosphorus or other product of electro-magnetism, that of a madman too much; the brain of an ordinary man has but little, while that of a man of genius is saturated to its due degree. The man constantly in love, the street-porter, the dancer, the large eater, are the ones who disperse the force

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resulting from their electrical apparatus. Consequently, our feelings —"

"Enough, Balthazar! you terrify me; you commit sacrilege. What, is my love —"

"An ethereal matter disengaged, an emanation, the key of the Absolute. Conceive if I — I, the first, should find it, find it, find it!"

As he uttered the words in three rising tones, the expression of his face rose by degrees to inspiration. "I shall make metals," he cried; "I shall make diamonds, I shall be a co-worker with Nature!"

"Will you be the happier?" she asked in despair. "Accursed science! accursed demon! You forget, Claës, that you commit the sin of pride, the sin of which Satan was guilty; you assume the attributes of God."

"Oh! oh! God!"

"He denies Him!" she cried, wringing her hands. "Claës, God wields a power that you can never gain."

At this argument, which seemed to discredit his beloved Science, he looked at his wife and trembled.

"What power?" he asked.

"Primal force — motion," she replied. "This is what I learn from the books your mania has constrained me to read. Analyze fruits, flowers, Malaga wine; you will discover, undoubtedly, that their substances come, like those of your water-cress, from a medium that seems foreign to them. You can, if need be, find them

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in nature; but when you have them, can you combine them? can you make the flowers, the fruits, the Malaga wine? Will you have grasped the inscrutable effects of the sun, of the atmosphere of Spain? Ah! decomposing is not creating."

"If I discover the magistral force, I shall be able to create."

"Will nothing stop him?" cried Pépita. "Oh! my love, my love! it is killed! I have lost him!"

She wept bitterly, and her eyes, illumined by grief and by the sanctity of the feelings that flooded her soul, shone with greater beauty than ever through her tears.

"Yes," she resumed in a broken voice, "you are dead to all. I see it but too well. Science is more powerful within you than your own self; it bears you to heights from which you will return no more to be the companion of a poor woman. What joys can I still offer you? Ah! I would fain believe, as a wretched consolation, that God has indeed created you to make manifest his works, to chant his praises; that he has put within your breast the irresistible power that has mastered you — But no; God is good; he would keep in your heart some thoughts of the woman who adores you, of the children you are bound to protect. It is the Evil One alone who is helping you to walk amid these fathomless abysses, these clouds of outer darkness, where the light of faith does not guide you, — nothing

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" She flung herself despairingly at his feet, raising up to him her supplicating hands."

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guides you but a terrible belief in your own faculties! Were it otherwise, would you not have seen that you have wasted nine hundred thousand francs in three years? Oh! do me justice, you, my God on earth! I reproach you not; were we alone I would bring you, on my knees, all that I possess and say, 'Take it, fling it into your furnace, turn it into smoke;' and I should laugh to see it float away in vapor. Were you poor, I would beg without shame for the coal to light your furnace. Oh! could my body yield your hateful Alkahest, I would fling myself upon those fires with joy, since your glory, your delight is in that unfound secret. But our children, Claës, our children! what will become of them if you do not soon discover this hellish thing? Do you know why Pierquin came to-day? He came for thirty thousand francs, which you owe and cannot pay. I told him that you had the money, so that I might spare you the mortification of his questions; but to get it I must sell our family silver."

She saw her husband's eyes grow moist, and she flung herself despairingly at his feet, raising up to him her supplicating hands.

"My friend," she cried, "refrain awhile from these researches; let us economize, let us save the money that may enable you to take them up hereafter, — if, indeed, you cannot renounce this work. Oh! I do not condemn it; I will heat your furnaces if you ask it; but I implore

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you, do not reduce our children to beggary. Perhaps you cannot love them, Science may have consumed your heart; but oh! do not bequeath them a wretched life in place of the happiness you owe them. Motherhood has sometimes been too weak a power in my heart; yes, I have sometimes wished I were not a mother, that I might be closer to your soul, your life! And now, to stifle my remorse, must I plead the cause of my children before you, and not my own?"

Her hair fell loose and floated over her shoulders, her eyes shot forth her feelings as though they had been arrows. She triumphed over her rival. Balthazar lifted her, carried her to the sofa, and knelt at her feet.

"Have I caused you such grief?" he said, in the tone of a man waking from a painful dream.

"My poor Claës! yes, and you will cause me more, in spite of yourself," she said, passing her hand over his hair. "Sit here beside me," she continued, pointing to the sofa. "Ah! I can forget it all now, now that you come back to us; all can be repaired — but you will not abandon me again? say that you will not! My noble husband, grant me a woman's influence on your heart, that influence which is so needful to the happiness of suffering artists, to the troubled minds of great men. You may be harsh to me, angry with me if you will, but let me check you a little for your good. I will never abuse the power if you will grant it. Be

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famous, but be happy too. Do not love Chemistry better than you love us. Hear me, we will be generous; we will let Science share your heart; but oh! my Claës, be just; let us have our half. Tell me, is not my disinterestedness sublime?"

She made him smile. With the marvellous art such women possess, she carried the momentous question into the regions of pleasantry where women reign. But though she seemed to laugh, her heart was violently contracted and could not easily recover the quiet even action that was habitual to it. And yet, as she saw in the eyes of Balthazar the rebirth of a love which was once her glory, the full return of a power she thought she had lost, she said to him with a smile: —

"Believe me, Balthazar, nature made us to feel; and though you may wish us to be mere electrical machines, yet your gases and your ethereal disengaged matters will never explain the gift we possess of looking into futurity."

"Yes," he exclaimed, "by affinity. The power of vision which makes the poet, the power of deduction which makes the man of science, are based on invisible affinities, intangible, imponderable, which vulgar minds class as moral phenomena, whereas they are physical effects. The prophet sees and deduces. Unfortunately, such affinities are too rare and too obscure to be subjected to analysis or observation."

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"Is this," she said, giving him a kiss to drive away the Chemistry she had so unfortunately reawakened, "what you call an affinity?"

"No; it is a compound; two substances that are equivalents are neutral, they produce no reaction —"

"Oh! hush, hush," she cried, "you will make me die of grief. I can never bear to see my rival in the transports of your love."

"But, my dear life, I think only of you. My work is for the glory of my family. You are the basis of all my hopes."

"Ah, look me in the eyes!"

The scene had made her as beautiful as a young woman; of her whole person Balthazar saw only her head, rising from a cloud of lace and muslin.

"Yes, I have done wrong to abandon you for Science," he said. "If I fall back into thought and preoccupation, then, my Pépita, you must drag me from them; I desire it."

She lowered her eyes and let him take her hand, her greatest beauty, — a hand that was both strong and delicate.

"But I ask more," she said.

"You are so lovely, so delightful, you can obtain all," he answered.

"I wish to destroy that laboratory, and chain up Science," she said, with fire in her eyes.

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"So be it — let Chemistry go to the devil!"

"This moment effaces all!" she cried. "Make me suffer now, if you will."

Tears came to Balthazar's eyes, as he heard these words.

"You were right, love," he said. "I have seen you through a veil; I have not understood you."

"If it concerned only me," she said, "willingly would I have suffered in silence, never would I have raised my voice against my sovereign. But your sons must be thought of, Claës. If you continue to dissipate your property, no matter how glorious the object you have in view the world will take little account of it, it will only blame you and yours. But surely, it is enough for a man of your noble nature that his wife has shown him a danger he did not perceive. We will talk of this no more," she cried, with a smile and a glance of coquetry. "To-night, my Claës, let us not be less than happy."

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VII.

On the morrow of this evening so eventful for the Claës family, Balthazar, from whom Joséphine had doubtless obtained some promise as to the cessation of his researches, remained in the parlor, and did not enter his laboratory. The succeeding day the household prepared to move into the country, where they stayed for more than two months, only returning to town in time to prepare for the fête which Claës determined to give, as in former years, to commemorate his wedding day. He now began by degrees to obtain proof of the disorder which his experiments and his indifference had brought into his business affairs.

Madame Claës, far from irritating the wound by remarking on it, continually found remedies for the evil that was done. Of the seven servants who customarily served the family, there now remained only Lemulquinier, Josette the cook, and an old waiting-woman, named Martha, who had never left her mistress since the latter left her convent. It was of course impossible to give a fête to the whole society of Douai with so few

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servants, but Madame Claës overcame all difficulties by proposing to send to Paris for a cook, to train the gardener's son as a waiter, and to borrow Pierquin's manservant. Thus the pinched circumstances of the family passed unnoticed by the community.

During the twenty days of preparation for the fête, Madame Claës was cleverly able to outwit her husband's listlessness. She commissioned him to select the rarest plants and flowers to decorate the grand staircase, the gallery, and the salons; then she sent him to Dunkerque to order one of those monstrous fish which are the glory of the burgher tables in the northern departments. A fête like that the Claës were about to give is a serious affair, involving thought and care and active correspondence, in a land where traditions of hospitality put the family honor so much at stake that to servants as well as masters a grand dinner is like a victory won over the guests. Oysters arrived from Ostend, grouse were imported from Scotland, fruits came from Paris; in short, not the smallest accessory was lacking to the hereditary luxury.

A ball at the House of Claës had an importance of its own. The government of the department was then at Douai, and the anniversary fête of the Claës usually opened the winter season and set the fashion to the neighborhood. For fifteen years, Balthazar had endeavored to make it a distinguished occasion, and had

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succeeded so well that the fête was talked of throughout a circumference of sixty miles, and the toilettes, the guests, the smallest details, the novelties exhibited, and the events that took place, were discussed far and wide. These preparations now prevented Claës from thinking, for the time being, of the Alkahest. Since his return to social life and domestic ideas, the servant of science had recovered his self-love as a man, as a Fleming, as the master of a household, and he now took pleasure in the thought of surprising the whole country. He resolved to give a special character to this ball by some exquisite novelty; and he chose, among all other caprices of luxury, the loveliest, the richest, and the most fleeting, — he turned the old mansion into a fairy bower of rare plants and flowers, and prepared choice bouquets for all the ladies.

The other details of the fête were in keeping with this unheard-of luxury, and nothing seemed likely to mar the effect. But the Twenty-ninth Bulletin and the news of the terrible disasters of the grand army in Russia, and at the passage of the Beresina, were made known on the afternoon of the appointed day. A sincere and profound grief was felt in Douai, and those who were present at the fête, moved by a natural feeling of patriotism, unanimously declined to dance.

Among the letters which arrived that day in Douai, was one for Balthazar from Monsieur de Wierzchownia,

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then in Dresden and dying, he wrote, from wounds received in one of the late engagements. He remembered his promise, and desired to bequeath to his former host several ideas on the subject of the Absolute, which had come to him since the period of their meeting. The letter plunged Claës into a revery which apparently did honor to his patriotism; but his wife was not misled by it. To her, this festal day brought a double mourning: and the ball, during which the House of Claës shone with departing lustre, was sombre and sad in spite of its magnificence, and the many choice treasures gathered by the hands of six generations, which the people of Douai now beheld for the last time.

Marguerite Claës, just sixteen, was the queen of the day, and on this occasion her parents presented her to society. She attracted all eyes by the extreme simplicity and candor of her air and manner, and especially by the harmony of her form and countenance with the characteristics of her home. She was the embodiment of the Flemish girl whom the painters of that country loved to represent, — the head perfectly rounded and full, chestnut hair parted in the middle and laid smoothly on the brow, gray eyes with a mixture of green, handsome arms, natural stoutness which did not detract from her beauty, a timid air, and yet, on the high square brow an expression of firmness, hidden at present under an apparent calmness and docility. Without being sad or

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melancholy, she seemed to have little natural enjoyment. Reflectiveness, order, a sense of duty, the three chief expressions of Flemish nature, were the characteristics of a face that seemed cold at first sight, but to which the eye was recalled by a certain grace of outline and a placid pride which seemed the pledges of domestic happiness. By one of those freaks which physiologists have not yet explained, she bore no likeness to either father or mother, but was the living image of her maternal great-grandmother, a Conyncks of Bruges, whose portrait, religiously preserved, bore witness to the resemblance.

The supper gave some life to the ball. If the military disasters forbade the delights of dancing, every one felt that they need not exclude the pleasures of the table. The true patriots, however, retired early; only the more indifferent remained, together with a few card-players and the intimate friends of the family. Little by little the brilliantly lighted house, to which all the notabilities of Douai had flocked, sank into silence, and by one o'clock in the morning the great gallery was deserted, the lights were extinguished in one salon after another, and the court-yard, lately so bustling and brilliant, grew dark and gloomy, — prophetic image of the future that lay before the family. When the Claës returned to their own appartement, Balthazar gave his wife the letter he had received from the Polish officer:

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Joséphine returned it with a mournful gesture; she foresaw the coming doom.

From that day forth, Balthazar made no attempt to disguise the weariness and the depression that assailed him. In the mornings, after the family breakfast, he played for awhile in the parlor with little Jean, and talked to his daughters, who were busy with their sewing, or embroidery or lace-work; but he soon wearied of the play and of the talk, and seemed at last to get through with them as a duty. When his wife came down again after dressing, she always found him sitting in an easy-chair looking blankly at Marguerite and Félicie, quite undisturbed by the rattle of their bobbins. When the newspaper was brought in, he read it slowly like a retired merchant at a loss how to kill the time. Then he would get up, look at the sky through the window panes, go back to his chair and mend the fire drearily, as though he were deprived of all consciousness of his own movements by the tyranny of ideas.

Madame Claës keenly regretted her defects of education and memory. It was difficult for her to sustain an interesting conversation for any length of time; perhaps this is always difficult between two persons who have said everything to each other, and are forced to seek for subjects of interest outside the life of the heart, or the life of material existence. The life of the heart has its own moments of expansion which

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need some stimulus to bring them forth; discussions of material life cannot long occupy superior minds accustomed to decide promptly; and the mere gossip of society is intolerable to loving natures. Consequently, two isolated beings who know each other thoroughly ought to seek their enjoyments in the higher regions of thought; for it is impossible to satisfy with paltry things the immensity of the relation between them. Moreover, when a man has accustomed himself to deal with great subjects, he becomes unamusable, unless he preserves in the depths of his heart a certain guileless simplicity and unconstraint which often make great geniuses such charming children; but the childhood of the heart is a rare human phenomenon among those whose mission it is to see all, know all, and comprehend all.

During these first months, Madame Claës worked her way through this critical situation, by unwearying efforts, which love or necessity suggested to her. She tried to learn backgammon, which she had never been able to play, but now, from an impetus easy to understand, she ended by mastering it. Then she interested Balthazar in the education of his daughters, and asked him to direct their studies. All such resources were, however, soon exhausted. There came a time when Joséphine's relation to Balthazar was like that of Madame de Maintenon to Louis XIV.; she had to amuse

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the unamusable, but without the pomps of power or the wiles of a court which could play comedies like the sham embassies from the King of Siam and the Shah of Persia. After wasting the revenues of France, Louis XIV., no longer young or successful, was reduced to the expedients of a family heir to raise the money he needed; in the midst of his grandeur he felt his impotence, and the royal nurse who had rocked the cradles of his children was often at her wit's end to rock his, or soothe the monarch now suffering from his misuse of men and things, of life and God. Claës, on the contrary, suffered from too much power. Stifling in the clutch of a single thought, he dreamed of the pomps of Science, of treasures for the human race, of glory for himself. He suffered as artists suffer in the grip of poverty, as Samson suffered beneath the pillars of the temple. The result was the same for the two sovereigns; though the intellectual monarch was crushed by his inward force, the other by his weakness.

What could Pépita do, singly, against this species of scientific nostalgia? After employing every means that family life afforded her, she called society to the rescue, and gave two "cafés" every week. Cafés at Douai took the place of teas. A café was an assemblage at which, during a whole evening, the guests sipped the delicious wines and liqueurs which overflow the cellars of that ever-blessed land, ate the Flemish dainties and

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took their *café noir* or their *café au lait frappé*, while the women sang ballads, discussed each other's toilettes, and related the gossip of the day. It was a living picture by Mieris or Terburg, without the pointed gray hats, the scarlet plumes, or the beautiful costumes of the sixteenth century. And yet, Balthazar's efforts to play the part of host, his constrained courtesy, his forced animation, left him the next day in a state of languor which showed but too plainly the depths of the inward ill.

These continual fêtes, weak remedies for the real evil, only increased it. Like branches which caught him as he rolled down the precipice, they retarded Claës's fall, but in the end he fell the heavier. Though he never spoke of his former occupations, never showed the least regret for the promise he had given not to renew his researches, he grew to have the melancholy motions, the feeble voice, the depression of a sick person. The ennui that possessed him showed at times in the very manner with which he picked up the tongs and built fantastic pyramids in the fire with bits of coal, utterly unconscious of what he was doing. When night came he was evidently relieved; sleep no doubt released him from the importunities of thought: the next day he rose wearily to encounter another day, — seeming to measure time as the tired traveller measures the desert he is forced to cross.

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If Madame Claës knew the cause of this languor she endeavored not to see the extent of its ravages. Full of courage against the sufferings of the mind, she was helpless against the generous impulses of the heart. She dared not question Balthazar when she saw him listening to the laughter of little Jean or the chatter of his girls, with the air of a man absorbed in secret thoughts; but she shuddered when she saw him shake off his melancholy and try, with generous intent, to seem cheerful, that he might not distress others. The little coquetries of the father with his daughters, or his games with little Jean, moistened the eyes of the poor wife, who often left the room to hide the feelings that heroic effort caused her, — a heroism the cost of which is well understood by women, a generosity that well-nigh breaks their heart. At such times Madame Claës longed to say, "Kill me, and do what you will!"

Little by little Balthazar's eyes lost their fire and took the glaucous opaque tint which overspreads the eyes of old men. His attentions to his wife, his manner of speaking, his whole bearing, grew heavy and inert. These symptoms became more marked towards the end of April, terrifying Madame Claës, to whom the sight was now intolerable, and who had all along reproached herself a thousand times while she admired the Flemish loyalty which kept her husband faithful to his promise.

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At last, one day when Balthazar seemed more depressed than ever, she hesitated no longer; she resolved to sacrifice everything and bring him back to life.

"Dear friend," she said, "I release you from your promise."

Balthazar looked at her in amazement.

"You are thinking of your researches, are you not?" she continued.

He answered by a gesture of startling eagerness. Far from remonstrating, Madame Claës, who had had leisure to sound the abyss into which they were about to fall together, took his hand and pressed it, smiling.

"Thank you," she said; "now I am sure of my power. You sacrificed more than your life to me. In future, be the sacrifices mine. Though I have sold some of my diamonds, enough are left, with those my brother gave me, to get the necessary money for your experiments. I intended those jewels for my daughters, but your glory shall sparkle in their stead; and, besides, you will some day replace them with other and finer diamonds."

The joy that suddenly lighted her husband's face was like a death-knell to the wife: she saw, with anguish, that the man's passion was stronger than himself. Claës had faith in his work which enabled him to walk without faltering on a path which, to his wife, was the edge of a precipice. For him faith, for her doubt,—

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for her the heavier burden: does not the woman ever suffer for the two? At this moment she chose to believe in his success, that she might justify to herself her connivance in the probable wreck of their fortunes.

"The love of all my life can be no recompense for your devotion, Pépita," said Claës, deeply moved.

He had scarcely uttered the words when Marguerite and Félicie entered the room and wished him good-morning. Madame Claës lowered her eyes and remained for a moment speechless in presence of her children, whose future she had just sacrificed to a delusion; her husband, on the contrary, took them on his knees, and talked to them gayly, delighted to give vent to the joy that choked him.

From this day Madame Claës shared the impassioned life of her husband. The future of her children, their father's credit, were two motives as powerful to her as glory and science were to Claës. After the diamonds were sold in Paris, and the purchase of chemicals was again begun, the unhappy woman never knew another hour's peace of mind. The demon of Science and the frenzy of research which consumed her husband now agitated her own mind; she lived in a state of continual expectation, and sat half-lifeless for days together in the deep armchair, paralyzed by the very violence of her wishes, which, finding no food, like those of

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Balthazar, in the daily hopes of the laboratory, tormented her spirit and aggravated her doubts and fears. Sometimes, blaming herself for compliance with a passion whose object was futile and condemned by the Church, she would rise, go to the window on the courtyard and gaze with terror at the chimney of the laboratory. If the smoke were rising, an expression of despair came into her face, a conflict of thoughts and feelings raged in her heart and mind. She beheld her children's future fleeing in that smoke, but — was she not saving their father's life? was it not her first duty to make him happy? This last thought calmed her for a moment.

She obtained the right to enter the laboratory and remain there; but even this melancholy satisfaction was soon renounced. Her sufferings were too keen when she saw that Balthazar took no notice of her, or seemed at times annoyed by her presence; in that fatal place she went through paroxysms of jealous impatience, angry desires to destroy the building, — a living death of untold miseries. Lemulquinier became to her a species of barometer: if she heard him whistle as he laid the breakfast-table or the dinner-table, she guessed that Balthazar's experiments were satisfactory, and there were prospects of a coming success; if, on the other hand, the man were morose and gloomy, she looked at him and trembled, — Balthazar must surely be

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dissatisfied. Mistress and valet ended by understanding each other, notwithstanding the proud reserve of the one and the reluctant submission of the other.

Feeble and defenceless against the terrible prostrations of thought, the poor woman at last gave way under the alternations of hope and despair which increased the distress of the loving wife, and the anxieties of the mother trembling for her children. She now practised the doleful silence which formerly chilled her heart, not observing the gloom that pervaded the house, where whole days went by in that melancholy parlor without a smile, often without a word. Led by sad maternal foresight, she trained her daughters to household work, and tried to make them skilful in womanly employments, that they might have the means of living if destitution came. The outward calm of this quiet home covered terrible agitations. Towards the end of the summer Balthazar had used the money derived from the diamonds, and was twenty thousand francs in debt to Messieurs Protez and Chiffreville.

In August, 1813, about a year after the scene with which this history begins, although Claës had made a few valuable experiments, for which, unfortunately, he cared but little, his efforts had been without result as to the real object of his researches. There came a day when he ended the whole series of experiments, and the sense of his impotence crushed him; the certainty of

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having fruitlessly wasted enormous sums of money drove him to despair. It was a frightful catastrophe. He left the garret, descended slowly to the parlor, and threw himself into a chair in the midst of his children, remaining motionless for some minutes as though dead, making no answer to the questions his wife pressed upon him. Tears came at last to his relief, and he rushed to his own chamber that no one might witness his despair.

Joséphine followed him and drew him into her own room, where, alone with her, Balthazar gave vent to his anguish. These tears of a man, these broken words of the hopeless toiler, these bitter regrets of the husband and father, did Madame Claës more harm than all her past sufferings. The victim consoled the executioner. When Balthazar said to her in a tone of dreadful conviction: "I am a wretch; I have gambled away the lives of my children, and your life; you can have no happiness unless I kill myself," — the words struck home to her heart; she knew her husband's nature enough to fear he might at once act out the despairing wish: an inward convulsion, disturbing the very sources of life itself, seized her, and was all the more dangerous because she controlled its violent effects beneath a deceptive calm of manner.

"My friend," she said, "I have consulted, not Pierquin, whose friendship does not hinder him from feeling

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some secret satisfaction at our ruin, but an old man who has been as good to me as a father. The Abbé de Solis, my confessor, has shown me how we can still save ourselves from ruin. He came to see the pictures. The value of those in the gallery is enough to pay the sums you have borrowed on your property, and also all that you owe to Messieurs Protez and Chiffreville, who have no doubt an account against you."

Claës made an affirmative sign and bowed his head, the hair of which was now white.

"Monsieur de Solis knows the Happe and Duncker families of Amsterdam; they have a mania for pictures, and are anxious, like all parvenus, to display a luxury which ought to belong only to the old families: he thinks they will pay the full value of ours. By this means we can recover our independence, and out of the purchase money, which will amount to over one hundred thousand ducats, you will have enough to continue the experiments. Your daughters and I will be content with very little; we can fill up the empty frames with other pictures in course of time and by economy; meantime you will be happy."

Balthazar raised his head and looked at his wife with a joy that was mingled with fear. Their rôles were changed. The wife was the protector of the husband. He, so tender, he, whose heart was so at one with his Pépita's, now held her in his arms without perceiving the

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horrible convulsion that made her palpitate, and even shook her hair and her lips with a nervous shudder.

"I dared not tell you," he said, "that between me and the Unconditioned, the Absolute, scarcely a hair's breadth intervenes. To gasify metals, I only need to find the means of submitting them to intense heat in some centre where the pressure of the atmosphere is nil, — in short, in a vacuum."

Madame Claës could not endure the egotism of this reply. She expected a passionate acknowledgment of her sacrifices — she received a problem in chemistry! The poor woman left her husband abruptly and returned to the parlor, where she fell into a chair between her frightened daughters, and burst into tears. Marguerite and Félicie took her hands, kneeling one on each side of her, not knowing the cause of her grief, and asking at intervals, "Mother, what is it?"

"My poor children, I am dying; I feel it."

The answer struck home to Marguerite's heart; she saw, for the first time on her mother's face, the signs of that peculiar pallor which only comes on olive-tinted skins.

"Martha, Martha!" cried Félicie, "come quickly; mamma wants you."

The old duenna ran in from the kitchen, and as soon as she saw the livid hue of the dusky skin usually high-colored, she cried out in Spanish, —

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"Body of Christ! madame is dying!"

Then she rushed precipitately back, told Josette to heat water for a footbath, and returned to the parlor.

"Don't alarm Monsieur Claës; say nothing to him, Martha," said her mistress. "My poor dear girls," she added, pressing Marguerite and Félicie to her heart with a despairing action; "I wish I could live long enough to see you married and happy. Martha," she continued, "tell Lemulquinier to go to Monsieur de Solis and ask him in my name to come here."

The shock of this attack extended to the kitchen. Josette and Martha, both devoted to Madame Claës and her daughters, felt the blow in their own affections. Martha's dreadful announcement, — "Madame is dying; monsieur must have killed her; get ready a mustard-bath," — forced certain exclamations from Josette, which she launched at Lemulquinier. He, cold and impassive, went on eating at the corner of a table before one of the windows of the kitchen, where all was kept as clean as the boudoir of a fine lady.

"I knew how it would end," said Josette, glancing at the valet and mounting a stool to take down a copper kettle that shone like gold. "There's no mother could quietly stand by and see a father amusing himself by chopping up a fortune like his into sausage-meat."

Josette, whose head was covered by a round cap with crimped borders, which made it look like a German

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nut-cracker, cast a sour look at Lemulquinier, which the greenish tinge of her prominent little eyes made almost venomous. The old valet shrugged his shoulders with a motion worthy of Mirabeau when irritated; then he filled his large mouth with bread and butter sprinkled with chopped onion.

"Instead of thwarting monsieur, madame ought to give him more money," he said; "and then we should soon be rich enough to swim in gold. There 's not the thickness of a farthing between us and — "

"Well, you 've got twenty thousand francs laid by; why don't you give 'em to monsieur? he 's your master, and if you are so sure of his doings — "

"You don't know anything about them, Josette. Mind your pots and pans, and heat the water," remarked the old Fleming, interrupting the cook.

"I know enough to know there used to be several thousand ounces of silver-ware about this house which you and your master have melted up; and if you are allowed to have your way, you 'll make ducks and drakes of everything till there 's nothing left."

"And monsieur," added Martha, entering the kitchen, "will kill madame, just to get rid of a woman who restrains him and won't let him swallow up everything he 's got. He 's possessed by the devil; anybody can see that. You don't risk your soul in helping him, Mulquinier, because you have n't got any; look at

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you! sitting there like a bit of ice when we are all in such distress; the young ladies are crying like two Magdalens. Go and fetch Monsieur l'Abbé de Solis."

"I've got something to do for monsieur. He told me to put the laboratory in order," said the valet. "Besides, it's too far—go yourself."

"Just hear the brute!" cried Martha. "Pray who is to give madame her foot-bath? do you want her to die? she has got a rush of blood to the head."

"Mulquinier," said Marguerite, coming into the servants' hall, which adjoined the kitchen, "on your way back from Monsieur de Solis, call at Dr. Pierquin's house and ask him to come here at once."

"Ha! you've got to go now," said Josette.

"Mademoiselle, monsieur told me to put the laboratory in order," said Lemulquinier, facing the two women and looking them down, with a despotic air.

"Father," said Marguerite, to Monsieur Claës, who was just then descending the stairs, "can you let Mulquinier do an errand for us in town?"

"Now you're forced to go, you old barbarian!" cried Martha, as she heard Monsieur Claës put Mulquinier at his daughter's bidding.

The lack of good-will and devotion shown by the old valet for the family whom he served was a fruitful cause of quarrel between the two women and Lemulquinier,

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whose cold-heartedness had the effect of increasing the loyal attachment of Josette and the old duenna.

This dispute, apparently so paltry, was destined to influence the future of the Claës family when, at a later period, they needed succor in misfortune.

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VIII.

Balthazar was again so absorbed that he did not notice Joséphine's condition. He took Jean upon his knee and trotted him mechanically, pondering, no doubt, the problem he now had the means of solving. He saw them bring the footbath to his wife, who was still in the parlor, too weak to rise from the low chair in which she was lying; he gazed abstractedly at his daughters now attending on their mother, without inquiring the cause of their tender solicitude. When Marguerite or Jean attempted to speak aloud, Madame Claës hushed them and pointed to Balthazar. Such a scene was of a nature to make a young girl think; and Marguerite, placed as she was between her father and mother, was old enough and sensible enough to weigh their conduct.

There comes a moment in the private life of every family when the children, voluntarily or involuntarily, judge their parents. Madame Claës foresaw the dangers of that moment. Her love for Balthazar impelled her to justify in Marguerite's eyes conduct that might,

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to the upright mind of a girl of sixteen, seem faulty in a father. The very respect which she showed at this moment for her husband, making herself and her condition of no account that nothing might disturb his meditation, impressed her children with a sort of awe of the paternal majesty. Such self-devotion, however infectious it might be, only increased Marguerite's admiration for her mother, to whom she was more particularly bound by the close intimacy of their daily lives. This feeling was based on the intuitive perception of sufferings whose causes naturally occupied the young girl's mind. No human power could have hindered some chance word dropped by Martha, or by Josette, from enlightening her as to the real reasons for the condition of her home during the last four years. Notwithstanding Madame Claës's reserve, Marguerite discovered slowly, thread by thread, the clue to the domestic drama. She was soon to be her mother's active confidante, and later, under other circumstances, a formidable judge.

Madame Claës's watchful care now centred upon her eldest daughter, to whom she endeavored to communicate her own self-devotion towards Balthazar. The firmness and sound judgment which she recognized in the young girl made her tremble at the thought of a possible struggle between father and daughter whenever her own death should make the latter mistress of

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the household. The poor woman had reached a point where she dreaded the consequences of her death far more than death itself. Her tender solicitude for Balthazar showed itself in the resolution she had this day taken. By freeing his property from incumbrance she secured his independence, and prevented all future disputes by separating his interests from those of her children. She hoped to see him happy until she closed her eyes on earth, and she studied to transmit the tenderness of her own heart to that of Marguerite, trusting that his daughter might continue to be to him an angel of love, while exercising over the family a protecting and conservative authority. Might she not thus shed the light of her love upon her dear ones from beyond the grave? Nevertheless, she was not willing to lower the father in the eyes of his daughter by initiating her into the secret dangers of his scientific passion before it became necessary to do so. She studied Marguerite's soul and character, seeking to discover if the girl's own nature would lead her to be a mother to her brothers and her sister, and a tender, gentle helpmeet to her father.

Madame Claës's last days were thus embittered by fears and mental disquietudes which she dared not confide to others. Conscious that the recent scene had struck her death-blow, she turned her thoughts wholly to the future. Balthazar, meanwhile, now permanently

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unfitted for the care of property or the interests of domestic life, thought only of the Absolute.

The heavy silence that reigned in the parlor was broken only by the monotonous beating of Balthazar's foot, which he continued to trot, wholly unaware that Jean had slid from his knee. Marguerite, who was sitting beside her mother and watching the changes on that pallid, convulsed face, turned now and again to her father, wondering at his indifference. Presently the street-door clanged, and the family saw the Abbé de Solis leaning on the arm of his nephew and slowly crossing the court-yard.

"Ah! there is Monsieur Emmanuel," said Félicie.

"That good young man!" exclaimed Madame Claës; "I am glad to welcome him."

Marguerite blushed at the praise that escaped her mother's lips. For the last two days a remembrance of the young man had stirred mysterious feelings in her heart, and wakened in her mind thoughts that had lain dormant. During the visit made by the Abbé de Solis to Madame Claës on the occasion of his examining the pictures, there happened certain of those imperceptible events which wield so great an influence upon life; and their results were sufficiently important to necessitate a brief sketch of the two personages now first introduced into the history of this family.

It was a matter of principle with Madame Claës to

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perform the duties of her religion privately Her confessor, who was almost unknown in the family, now entered the house for the second time only; but there, as elsewhere, every one was impressed with a sort of tender admiration at the aspect of the uncle and his nephew.

The Abbé de Solis was an octogenarian, with silvery hair, and a withered face from which the vitality seemed to have retreated to the eyes. He walked with difficulty, for one of his shrunken legs ended in a painfully deformed foot, which was cased in a species of velvet bag, and obliged him to use a crutch when the arm of his nephew was not at hand. His bent figure and decrepit body conveyed the impression of a delicate, suffering nature, governed by a will of iron and the spirit of religious purity. This Spanish priest, who was remarkable for his vast learning, his sincere piety, and a wide knowledge of men and things, had been successively a Dominican friar, the *grand pénitencier* of Toledo, and the vicar-general of the archbishopric of Malines. If the French Revolution had not intervened, the influence of the Casa-Réal family would have made him one of the highest dignitaries of the Church; but the grief he felt for the death of the young duke, Madame Claës's brother, who had been his pupil, turned him from active life, and he now devoted himself to the education of his nephew, who was made an orphan at an early age.

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After the conquest of Belgium, the Abbé de Solis settled at Douai to be near Madame Claës. From his youth up he had professed an enthusiasm for Saint Theresa which, together with the natural bent of his mind, led him to the mystical side of Christianity. Finding in Flanders, where Mademoiselle Bourignon and the writings of the Quietists and Illuminati made the greatest number of proselytes, a flock of Catholics devoted to those ideas, he remained there, — all the more willingly because he was looked up to as a patriarch by this particular communion, which continued to follow the doctrines of the Mystics notwithstanding the censures of the Church upon Fénelon and Madame Guyon. His morals were rigid, his life exemplary, and he was believed to have visions. In spite of his own detachment from the things of life, his affection for his nephew made him careful of the young man's interests. When a work of charity was to be done, the old abbé put the faithful of his flock under contribution before having recourse to his own means; and his patriarchal authority was so well established, his motives so pure, his discernment so rarely at fault, that every one was ready to answer his appeal. To give an idea of the contrast between the uncle and the nephew, we may compare the old man to a willow on the borders of a stream, hollowed to a skeleton and barely alive, and the young man to a sweet-brier clustering with roses, whose

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erect and graceful stems spring up about the hoary trunk of the old tree as if they would support it.

Emmanuel de Solis, rigidly brought up by his uncle, who kept him at his side as a mother keeps her daughter, was full of delicate sensibility, of half-dreamy innocence, — those fleeting flowers of youth which bloom perennially in souls that are nourished on religious principles. The old priest had checked all sensuous emotions in his pupil, preparing him for the trials of life by constant study and a discipline that was almost cloisteral. Such an education, which would launch the youth unstained upon the world and render him happy, provided he were fortunate in his earliest affections, had endowed him with a purity of spirit which gave to his person something of the charm that surrounds a maiden. His modest eyes, veiling a strong and courageous soul, sent forth a light that vibrated in the soul as the tones of a crystal bell sound their undulations on the ear. His face, though regular, was expressive, and charmed the eye with its clear-cut outline, the harmony of its lines, and the perfect repose which came of a heart at peace. All was harmonious. His black hair, his brown eyes and eyebrows, heightened the effect of a white skin and a brilliant color. His voice was such as might have been expected from his beautiful face; and something feminine in his movements accorded well with the melody of its tones and

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with the tender brightness of his eyes. He seemed unaware of the charm he exercised by his modest silence, the half-melancholy reserve of his manner, and the respectful attentions he paid to his uncle.

Those who saw the young man as he watched the uncertain steps of the old abbé, and altered his own to suit their devious course, looking for obstructions that might trip his uncle's feet and guiding him to a smoother way, could not fail to recognize in Emmanuel de Solis the generous nature which makes the human being a divine creation. There was something noble in the love that never criticised his uncle, in the obedience that never cavilled at the old man's orders; it seemed as though there were prophecy in the gracious name his godmother had given him. When the abbé gave proof of his Dominican despotism, in their own home or in the presence of others, Emmanuel would sometimes lift his head with so much dignity, as if to assert his metal should any other man assail him, that men of honor were moved at the sight like artists before a glorious picture; for noble sentiments ring as loudly in the soul from living incarnations as from the imagery of art.

Emmanuel had accompanied his uncle when the latter came to examine the pictures of the House of Claës. Hearing from Martha that the Abbé de Solis was in the gallery, Marguerite, anxious to see so celebrated a man, invented an excuse to join her mother and gratify her

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curiosity. Entering hastily, with the heedless gayety young girls assume at times to hide their wishes, she encountered near the old abbé, clothed in black and looking decrepit and cadaverous, the fresh, delightful face of a young man. The naïve glances of the youthful pair expressed their mutual astonishment. Marguerite and Emmanuel had no doubt seen each other in their dreams. Both lowered their eyes and raised them again with one impulse; each, by the action, made the same avowal. Marguerite took her mother's arm, and spoke to her to cover her confusion and find shelter under the maternal wing, turning her neck with a swan-like motion to keep sight of Emmanuel, who still supported his uncle on his arm. The light was cleverly arranged to give due value to the pictures, and the half-obscurity of the gallery encouraged those furtive glances which are the joy of timid natures. Neither went so far, even in thought, as the first note of love; yet both felt the mysterious trouble which stirs the heart, and is jealously kept secret in our youth from fastidiousness or modesty.

The first impression which forces a sensibility hitherto suppressed to overflow its borders, is followed in all young people by the same half-stupefied amazement which the first sounds of music produce upon a child. Some children laugh and think; others do not laugh till they have thought; but those whose hearts are called to

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live by poetry or love, listen stilly and hear the melody with a look where pleasure flames already, and the search for the infinite begins. If, from an irresistible feeling, we love the places where our childhood first perceived the beauties of harmony, if we remember with delight the musician, and even the instrument, that taught them to us, how much more shall we love the being who reveals to us the music of life? The first heart in which we draw the breath of love, — is it not our home, our native land? Marguerite and Emmanuel were, each to each, that Voice of music which wakes a sense, that hand which lifts the misty veil, and reveals the distant shores bathed in the fires of noonday.

When Madame Claës paused before a picture by Guido representing an angel, Marguerite bent forward to see the impression it made upon Emmanuel, and Emmanuel looked at Marguerite to compare the mute thought on the canvas with the living thought beside him. This involuntary and delightful homage was understood and treasured. The old abbé gravely praised the picture, and Madame Claës answered him, but the youth and the maiden were silent.

Such was their first meeting: the mysterious light of the picture gallery, the stillness of the old house, the presence of their elders, all contributed to trace upon their hearts the delicate lines of this vaporous mirage. The many confused thoughts that surged in Marguerite's

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mind grew calm and lay like a limpid ocean traversed by a luminous ray when Emmanuel murmured a few farewell words to Madame Claës. That voice, whose fresh and mellow tone sent nameless delights into her heart, completed the revelation that had come to her, — a revelation which Emmanuel, were he able, should cherish to his own profit; for it often happens that the man whom destiny employs to waken love in the heart of a young girl is ignorant of his work and leaves it unfinished. Marguerite bowed confusedly; her true farewell was in the glance which seemed unwilling to lose so pure and lovely a vision. Like a child she wanted her melody. Their parting took place at the foot of the old staircase near the parlor; and when Marguerite re-entered the room she watched the uncle and the nephew till the street-door closed upon them.

Madame Claës had been so occupied with the serious matters which caused her conference with the abbé that she did not on this occasion observe her daughter's manner. When Monsieur de Solis came again to the house on the occasion of her illness, she was too violently agitated to notice the color that rushed into Marguerite's face and betrayed the tumult of a virgin heart conscious of its first joy. By the time the old abbé was announced, Marguerite had taken up her sewing and appeared to give it such attention that she bowed to the uncle and nephew without looking at them. Monsieur

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Claës mechanically returned their salutation and left the room with the air of a man called away by his occupations. The good Dominican sat down beside Madame Claës and looked at her with one of those searching glances by which he penetrated the minds of others; the sight of Monsieur Claës and his wife was enough to make him aware of a catastrophe.

"My children," said the mother, "go into the garden; Marguerite, show Emmanuel your father's tulips."

Marguerite, half abashed, took Félicie's arm and looked at the young man, who blushed and caught up little Jean to cover his confusion. When all four were in the garden, Félicie and Jean ran to the other side, leaving Marguerite, who, conscious that she was alone with young de Solis, led him to the pyramid of tulips, arranged precisely in the same manner year after year by Lemulquinier.

"Do you love tulips?" asked Marguerite, after standing for a moment in deep silence, — a silence Emmanuel seemed little disposed to break.

"Mademoiselle, these flowers are beautiful, but to love them we must perhaps have a taste for them, and know how to understand their beauties. They dazzle me. Constant study in the gloomy little chamber in which I live, close to my uncle, makes me prefer those flowers that are softer to the eye."

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Saying these words he glanced at Marguerite; but the look, full as it was of confused desires, contained no allusion to the lily whiteness, the sweet serenity, the tender coloring which made her face a flower.

"Do you work very hard?" she asked, leading him to a wooden seat with a back, painted green. "Here," she continued, "the tulips are not so close; they will not tire your eyes. Yes, you are right, those colors are dazzling; they give pain."

"Do I work hard?" replied the young man after a short silence, as he smoothed the gravel with his foot. "Yes; I work at many things. My uncle wished to make me a priest."

"Oh!" exclaimed Marguerite, naïvely.

"I resisted; I felt no vocation for it. But it required great courage to oppose my uncle's wishes. He is so good, he loves me so much! Quite recently he bought a substitute to save me from the conscription — me, a poor orphan!"

"What do you mean to be?" asked Marguerite; then, immediately checking herself as though she would unsay the words, she added with a pretty gesture, "I beg your pardon; you must think me very inquisitive."

"Oh, mademoiselle," said Emmanuel, looking at her with tender admiration, "except my uncle, no one ever asked me that question. I am studying to be a teacher. I cannot do otherwise; I am not rich. If

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I were principal of a college-school in Flanders I should earn enough to live moderately, and I might marry some simple woman whom I could love. That is the life I look forward to. Perhaps that is why I prefer a daisy in the meadows to these splendid tulips, whose purple and gold and rubies and amethysts betoken a life of luxury, just as the daisy is emblematic of a sweet and patriarchal life, — the life of a poor teacher like me."

"I have always called the daisies marguerites," she said.

Emmanuel colored deeply and sought an answer from the sand at his feet. Embarrassed to choose among the thoughts that came to him, which he feared were silly, and disconcerted by his delay in answering, he said at last, "I dared not pronounce your name" — then he paused.

"A teacher?" she said.

"Mademoiselle, I shall be a teacher only as a means of living: I shall undertake great works which will make me nobly useful. I have a strong taste for historical researches."

"Ah!"

That "ah!" so full of secret thoughts added to his confusion; he gave a foolish laugh and said: —

"You make me talk of myself when I ought only to speak of you."

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"My mother and your uncle must have finished their conversation, I think," said Marguerite, looking into the parlor through the windows.

"Your mother seems to me greatly changed," said Emmanuel.

"She suffers, but she will not tell us the cause of her sufferings; and we can only try to share them with her."

Madame Claës had, in fact, just ended a delicate consultation which involved a case of conscience the Abbé de Solis alone could decide. Foreseeing the utter ruin of the family, she wished to retain, unknown to Balthazar who paid no attention to his business affairs, part of the price of the pictures which Monsieur de Solis had undertaken to sell in Holland, intending to hold it secretly in reserve against the day when poverty should overtake her children. With much deliberation, and after weighing every circumstance, the old Dominican approved the act as one of prudence. He took his leave to prepare at once for the sale, which he engaged to make secretly, so as not to injure Monsieur Claës in the estimation of others.

The next day Monsieur de Solis despatched his nephew, armed with letters of introduction, to Amsterdam, where Emmanuel, delighted to do a service to the Claës family, succeeded in selling all the pictures in the gallery to the noted bankers Happe and Duncker for the ostensible

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sum of eighty-five thousand Dutch ducats and fifteen thousand more which were paid over secretly to Madame Claës. The pictures were so well known that nothing was needed to complete the sale but an answer from Balthazar to the letter which Messieurs Happe and Duncker addressed to him. Emmanuel de Solis was commissioned by Claës to receive the price of the pictures, which were thereupon packed and sent away secretly, to conceal the sale from the people of Douai.

Towards the end of September, Balthazar paid off all the sums that he had borrowed, released his property from encumbrance, and resumed his chemical researches; but the House of Claës was deprived of its noblest ornament. Blinded by his passion, the master showed no regret; he felt so sure of repairing the loss that in selling the pictures he reserved a right of redemption. In Joséphine's eyes a hundred pictures were as nothing compared to domestic happiness and the satisfaction of her husband's mind; moreover, she refilled the gallery with other paintings, taken from the reception-rooms, and to conceal the gaps which these left in the front house, she changed the arrangement of the furniture.

When Balthazar's debts were all paid he had about two hundred thousand francs with which to carry on his experiments. The Abbé de Solis and his nephew

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took charge secretly of the fifteen thousand ducats reserved by Madame Claës. To increase that sum, the abbé sold the Dutch ducats, to which the events of the Continental war had given a commercial value. One hundred and sixty-five thousand francs were buried in the cellar of the house in which the abbé and his nephew resided.

Madame Claës had the melancholy happiness of seeing her husband incessantly busy and satisfied for nearly eight months. But the shock he had lately given her was too severe; she sank into a state of languor and debility which steadily increased. Balthazar was now so completely absorbed in science that neither the reverses which had overtaken France, nor the first fall of Napoleon, nor the return of the Bourbons, drew him from his laboratory; he was neither husband, father, nor citizen, — solely chemist.

Towards the close of 1814 Madame Claës declined so rapidly that she was no longer able to leave her bed. Unwilling to vegetate in her own chamber, the scene of so much happiness, where the memory of vanished joys forced involuntary comparisons with the present and depressed her, she moved into the parlor. The doctors encouraged this wish by declaring the room more airy, more cheerful, and therefore better suited to her condition. The bed in which the unfortunate woman ended her life was placed between the fireplace

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and a window looking on the garden. There she passed her last days, sacredly occupied in training the souls of her young daughters, striving to leave within them the fire of her own. Conjugal love, deprived of its manifestations, allowed maternal love to have its way. The mother now seemed the more delightful because her motherhood had blossomed late. Like all generous persons, she passed through sensitive phases of feeling which she mistook for remorse. Believing that she had defrauded her children of the tenderness that should have been theirs, she sought to redeem those imaginary wrongs; bestowing attentions and tender cares which made her precious to them; she longed to make her children live, as it were, within her heart; to shelter them beneath her feeble wings; to cherish them enough in the few remaining days to redeem the time during which she had neglected them. The sufferings of her mind gave to her words and her caresses a glowing warmth that issued from her soul. Her eyes caressed her children, her voice with its yearning intonations touched their hearts, her hand showered blessings on their heads.

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IX.

THE good people of Douai were not surprised that visitors were no longer received at the House of Claës, and that Balthazar gave no more fêtes on the anniversary of his marriage. Madame Claës's state of health seemed a sufficient reason for the change, and the payment of her husband's debts put a stop to the current gossip; moreover, the political vicissitudes to which Flanders was subjected, the war of the Hundred-days, and the occupation of the Allied armies, put the chemist and his researches completely out of people's minds. During those two years Douai was so often on the point of being taken, it was so constantly occupied either by the French or by the enemy, so many foreigners came there, so many of the country-people sought refuge within its walls, so many lives were in peril, so many catastrophes occurred, that each man thought only of himself.

The Abbé de Solis and his nephew, and the two Pierquins, doctor and lawyer, were the only persons who now visited Madame Claës; for whom the winter of 1814–1815 was a long and dreary death-scene. Her

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husband rarely came to see her. It is true that after dinner he remained some hours in the parlor, near her bed; but as she no longer had the strength to keep up a conversation, he merely said a few words, invariably the same, sat down, spoke no more, and a dreary silence settled down upon the room. The monotony of this existence was broken only on the days when the Abbé de Solis and his nephew passed the evening with Madame Claës.

While the abbé played backgammon with Balthazar, Marguerite talked with Emmanuel by the bedside of her mother, who smiled at their innocent joy, not allowing them to see how painful and yet how soothing to her wounded spirit were the fresh breezes of their virgin love, murmuring in fitful words from heart to heart. The inflection of their voices, to them so full of charm, to her was heart-breaking; a glance of mutual understanding surprised between the two threw her, half-dead as she was, back to the young and happy past which gave such bitterness to the present. Emmanuel and Marguerite with intuitive delicacy of feeling repressed the sweet half-childish play of love, lest it should hurt the saddened woman whose wounds they instinctively divined.

No one has yet remarked that feelings have an existence of their own, a nature which is developed by the circumstances that environ them, and in which they are born; they bear a likeness to the places of their growth,

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and keep the imprint of the ideas that influenced their development. There are passions ardently conceived which remain ardent, like that of Madame Claës for her husband: there are sentiments on which all life has smiled; these retain their spring-time gayety, their harvest-time of joy, seasons that never fail of laughter or of fêtes: but there are other loves, framed in melancholy, circled by distress, whose pleasures are painful, costly, burdened by fears, poisoned by remorse, or blackened by despair. The love in the heart of Marguerite and Emmanuel, as yet unknown to them for love, the sentiment that budded into life beneath the gloomy arches of the picture-gallery, beside the stern old abbé, in a still and silent moment, that love so grave and so discreet, yet rich in tender depths, in secret delights that were luscious to the taste as stolen grapes snatched from a corner of the vineyard, wore in coming years the sombre browns and grays that surrounded the hour of its birth.

Fearing to give expression to their feelings beside that bed of pain, they unconsciously increased their happiness by a concentration which deepened its imprint on their hearts. The devotion of the daughter, shared by Emmanuel, happy in thus uniting himself with Marguerite and becoming by anticipation the son of her mother, was their medium of communication. Melancholy thanks from the lips of the young girl sup-

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planted the honeyed language of lovers; the sighing of their hearts, surcharged with joy at some interchange of looks, was scarcely distinguishable from the sighs wrung from them by the mother's sufferings. Their happy little moments of indirect avowal, of unuttered promises, of smothered effusion, were like the allegories of Raphael painted on a black ground. Each felt a certainty that neither avowed; they knew the sun was shining over them, but they could not know what wind might chase away the clouds that gathered about their heads. They doubted the future; fearing that pain would ever follow them, they stayed timidly among the shadows of the twilight, not daring to say to each other, "Shall we end our days together?"

The tenderness which Madame Claës now testified for her children nobly concealed much that she endeavored to hide from herself. Her children caused her neither fear nor passionate emotion: they were her comforters, but they were not her life: she lived by them; she died through Balthazar. However painful her husband's presence might be to her, lost as he was for hours together in depths of thought from which he looked at her without seeing her, it was only during those cruel moments that she forgot her griefs. His indifference to the dying woman would have seemed criminal to a stranger, but Madame Claës and her daughters were accustomed to it; they knew his heart and they

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forgave him. If, during the daytime, Joséphine was seized by some sudden illness, if she were worse and seemed near dying, Claës was the only person in the house or in the town who remained ignorant of it. Lemulquinier knew it, but neither the daughters, bound to silence by their mother, nor Joséphine herself let Balthazar know the danger of the being he had once so passionately loved.

When his heavy step sounded in the gallery as he came to dinner, Madame Claës was happy — she was about to see him! and she gathered up her strength for that happiness. As he entered, the pallid face blushed brightly and recovered for an instant the semblance of health. Balthazar came to her bedside, took her hand, saw the misleading color on her cheek, and to him she seemed well. When he asked, "My dear wife, how are you to-day?" she answered, "Better, dear friend," and made him think she would be up and recovered on the morrow. His preoccupation was so great that he accepted this reply, and believed the illness of which his wife was dying a mere indisposition. Dying to the eyes of the world, in his alone she was living.

A complete separation between husband and wife was the result of this year. Claës slept in a distant chamber, got up early in the morning, and shut himself into his laboratory or his study. Seeing his wife only in presence of his daughters or of the two or three

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friends who came to visit them, he lost the habit of communicating with her. These two beings, formerly accustomed to think as one, no longer, unless at rare intervals, enjoyed those moments of communion, of passionate unreserve which feed the life of the heart; and finally there came a time when even these rare pleasures ceased. Physical suffering was now a boon to the poor woman, helping her to endure the void of separation, which might have killed her had she been truly living. Her bodily pain became so great that there were times when she was joyful in the thought that he whom she loved was not a witness of it. She lay watching Balthazar in the evening hours, and knowing him happy in his own way, she lived in the happiness she had procured for him, — a shadowy joy, and yet it satisfied her. She no longer asked herself if she were loved, she forced herself to believe it; and she glided over that icy surface, not daring to rest her weight upon it lest it should break and drown her soul in a gulf of awful nothingness.

No events stirred the calm of this existence; the malady that was slowly consuming Madame Claës added to the household stillness, and in this condition of passive gloom the House of Claës reached the first weeks of the year 1816. Pierquin, the lawyer, was destined, at the close of February, to strike the death-blow of the angelic woman who, in the words of the Abbé de Solis, was wellnigh without sin.

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"Madame," said Pierquin, seizing a moment when her daughters could not hear the conversation, "Monsieur Claës has directed me to borrow three hundred thousand francs on his property. You must do something to protect the future of your children."

Madame Claës clasped her hands and raised her eyes to the ceiling; then she thanked the notary with a sad smile and a kindly motion of her head which affected him.

His words were the stab that killed her. During that day she had yielded herself up to sad reflections which swelled her heart; she was like the wayfarer walking beside a precipice who loses his balance and a mere pebble rolls him to the depth of the abyss he has so long and so courageously skirted. When the notary left her, Madame Claës told Marguerite to bring writing materials; then she gathered up her remaining strength to write her last wishes. Several times she paused and looked at her daughter. The hour of confidence had come.

Marguerite's management of the household since her mother's illness had so amply fulfilled the dying woman's hopes that Madame Claës was able to look upon the future of the family without absolute despair, confident that she herself would live again in this strong and loving angel. Both women felt, no doubt, that sad and mutual confidences must be now made between

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them; the daughter looked at the mother, the mother at the daughter, tears flowing from their eyes. Several times, as Madame Claës rested from her writing, Marguerite said: "Mother?" then she stopped as if choking; but the mother, occupied with her last thoughts, did not ask the meaning of the interrogation. At last, Madame Claës wished to seal the letter; Marguerite held the taper, turning aside her head that she might not see the superscription.

"You can read it, my child," said the mother, in a heart-rending voice.

The young girl read the words, "To my daughter Marguerite."

"We will talk to each other after I have rested awhile," said Madame Claës, putting the letter under her pillow.

Then she fell back as if exhausted by the effort, and slept for several hours. When she woke, her two daughters and her two sons were kneeling by her bed and praying. It was Thursday. Gabriel and Jean had been brought from school by Emmanuel de Solis, who for the last six months was professor of history and philosophy.

"Dear children, we must part!" she cried. "You have never forsaken me, never! and he who —"

She stopped.

"Monsieur Emmanuel," said Marguerite, seeing the

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pallor on her mother's face, "go to my father, and tell him mamma is worse."

Young de Solis went to the door of the laboratory and persuaded Lemulquinier to make Balthazar come and speak to him. On hearing the urgent request of the young man, Claës answered, "I will come."

"Emmanuel," said Madame Claës when he returned to her, "take my sons away, and bring your uncle here. It is time to give me the last sacraments, and I wish to receive them from his hand."

When she was alone with her daughters she made a sign to Marguerite, who understood her and sent Félicie away.

"I have something to say to you myself, dear mamma," said Marguerite who, not believing her mother so ill as she really was, increased the wound Pierquin had given. "I have had no money for the household expenses during the last ten days; I owe six months' wages to the servants. Twice I have tried to ask my father for money, but did not dare to do so. You don't know, perhaps, that all the pictures in the gallery have been sold, and all the wines in the cellar?"

"He never told me!" exclaimed Madame Claës. "My God! thou callest me to thyself in time! My poor children! what will become of them?"

She made a fervent prayer, which brought the fires of repentance to her eyes.

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"Marguerite," she resumed, drawing the letter from her pillow, "here is a paper which you must not open or read until a time, after my death, when some great disaster has overtaken you; when, in short, you are without the means of living. My dear Marguerite, love your father, but take care of your brothers and your sister. In a few days, in a few hours perhaps, you will be the head of this household. Be economical. Should you find yourself opposed to the wishes of your father, — and it may so happen, because he has spent vast sums in searching for a secret whose discovery is to bring glory and wealth to his family, and he will no doubt need money, perhaps he may demand it of you, — should that time come, treat him with the tenderness of a daughter, strive to reconcile the interests of which you will be the sole protector with the duty which you owe to a father, to a great man who has sacrificed his happiness and his life to the glory of his family; he can only do wrong in act, his intentions are noble, his heart is full of love; you will see him once more kind and affectionate — *You!* Marguerite, it is my duty to say these words to you on the borders of the grave. If you wish to soften the anguish of my death, promise me, my child, to take my place beside your father; to cause him no grief; never to reproach him; never to condemn him. Be a gentle, considerate guardian of the home until — his work accomplished — he is again the master of his family."

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"I understand you, dear mother," said Marguerite, kissing the swollen eyelids of the dying woman. "I will do as you wish."

"Do not marry, my darling, until Gabriel can succeed you in the management of the property and the household. If you married, your husband might not share your feelings, he might bring trouble into the family and disturb your father's life."

Marguerite looked at her mother and said, "Have you nothing else to say to me about my marriage?"

"Can you hesitate, my child?" cried the dying woman in alarm.

"No," the daughter answered; "I promise to obey you."

"Poor girl! I did not sacrifice myself for you," said the mother, shedding hot tears. "Yet I ask you to sacrifice yourself for all. Happiness makes us selfish. Yes, Marguerite, I have been weak because I was happy. Be strong; preserve your own good sense to guard others who as yet have none. Act so that your brothers and your sister may not reproach my memory. Love your father, and do not oppose him — too much."

She laid her head on her pillow and said no more; her strength was gone; the inward struggle between the Wife and the Mother had been too violent.

A few moments later the clergy came, preceded by the Abbé de Solis, and the parlor was filled by the

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children and the household. When the ceremony was about to begin, Madame Claës, awakened by her confessor, looked about her and not seeing Balthazar said quickly, —

"Where is my husband?"

The words — summing up, as it were, her life and her death — were uttered in such lamentable tones that all present shuddered. Martha, in spite of her great age, darted out of the room, ran up the staircase and through the gallery, and knocked loudly on the door of the laboratory.

"Monsieur, madame is dying; they are waiting for you, to administer the last sacraments," she cried with the violence of indignation.

"I am coming," answered Balthazar.

Lemulquinier came down a moment later, and said his master was following him. Madame Claës's eyes never left the parlor door, but her husband did not appear until the ceremony was over. When at last he entered, Joséphine colored and a few tears rolled down her cheeks.

"Were you trying to decompose nitrogen?" she said to him with an angelic tenderness which made the spectators quiver.

"I have done it!" he cried joyfully; "Nitrogen contains oxygen and a substance of the nature of imponderable matter, which is apparently the principle of —"

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A murmur of horror interrupted his words and brought him to his senses.

"What did they tell me?" he demanded. "Are you worse? What is the matter?"

"This is the matter, monsieur," whispered the Abbé de Solis, indignant at his conduct; "your wife is dying, and you have killed her."

Without waiting for an answer the abbé took the arm of his nephew and went out followed by the family, who accompanied him to the court-yard. Balthazar stood as if thunderstruck; he looked at his wife, and a few tears dropped from his eyes.

"You are dying, and I have killed you!" he said. "What does he mean?"

"My husband," she answered, "I only lived in your love, and you have taken my life away from me; but you knew not what you did."

"Leave us," said Claës to his children, who now re-entered the room. "Have I for one moment ceased to love you?" he went on, sitting down beside his wife, and taking her hands and kissing them.

"My friend, I do not blame you. You made me happy — too happy, for I have not been able to bear the contrast between our early married life, so full of joy, and these last days, so desolate, so empty, when you are not yourself. The life of the heart, like the life of the body, has its functions. For six years you

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have been dead to love, to the family, to all that was once our happiness. I will not speak of our early married days; such joys must cease in the after-time of life, but they ripen into fruits which feed the soul, — confidence unlimited, the tender habits of affection: you have torn those treasures from me! I go in time: we live together no longer; you hide your thoughts and actions from me. How is it that you fear me? Have I ever given you one word, one look, one gesture of reproach? And yet, you have sold your last pictures, you have sold even the wine in your cellar, you are borrowing money on your property, and have said no word to me. Ah! I go from life weary of life. If you are doing wrong, if you delude yourself in following the unattainable, have I not shown you that my love could share your faults, could walk beside you and be happy, though you led me in the paths of crime? You loved me too well, — that was my glory; it is now my death. Balthazar, my illness has lasted long; it began on the day when here, in this place where I am about to die, you showed me that Science was more to you than Family. And now the end has come; your wife is dying, and your fortune lost. Fortune and wife were yours, — you could do what you willed with your own; but on the day of my death my property goes to my children, and you cannot touch it; what will then become of you? I am telling you the truth; I owe it to you. Dying

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eyes see far: when I am gone will anything outweigh that cursed passion which is now your life? If you have sacrificed your wife, your children will count but little in the scale; for I must be just and own you loved me above all. Two millions and six years of toil you have cast into the gulf, — and what have you found?"

At these words Claës grasped his whitened head in his hands and hid his face.

"Humiliation for yourself, misery for your children," continued the dying woman. "You are called in derision 'Claës the alchemist;' soon it will be 'Claës the madman.' For myself, I believe in you. I know you great and wise; I know your genius: but to the vulgar eye genius is mania. Fame is a sun that lights the dead; living, you will be unhappy with the unhappiness of great minds, and your children will be ruined. I go before I see your fame, which might have brought me consolation for my lost happiness. Oh, Balthazar! make my death less bitter to me, let me be certain that my children will not want for bread — Ah, nothing, nothing, not even you, can calm my fears."

"I swear," said Claës, "to —"

"No, do not swear, that you may not fail of your oath," she said, interrupting him. "You owed us your protection; we have been without it seven years. Science is your life. A great man should have neither wife nor children; he should tread alone the path of

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sacrifice. His virtues are not the virtues of common men; he belongs to the universe, he cannot belong to wife or family; he sucks up the moisture of the earth about him, like a majestic tree — and I, poor plant, I could not rise to the height of your life, I die at its feet. I have waited for this last day to tell you these dreadful thoughts: they came to me in the lightnings of desolation and anguish. Oh, spare my children! let these words echo in your heart. I cry them to you with my last breath. The wife is dead, dead; you have stripped her slowly, gradually, of her feelings, of her joys. Alas! without that cruel care could I have lived so long? But those poor children did not forsake me! they have grown beside my anguish, the mother still survives. Spare them! Spare my children!"

"Lemulquinier!" cried Claës in a voice of thunder.

The old man appeared.

"Go up and destroy all — instruments, apparatus, everything! Be careful, but destroy all. I renounce Science," he said to his wife.

"Too late," she answered, looking at Lemulquinier.

"Marguerite!" she cried, feeling herself about to die.

Marguerite came through the doorway and uttered a piercing cry as she saw her mother's eyes now glazing.

"Marguerite!" repeated the dying woman.

The exclamation contained so powerful an appeal to her daughter, she invested that appeal with such

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authority, that the cry was like a dying bequest. The terrified family ran to her side and saw her die; the vital forces were exhausted in that last conversation with her husband.

Balthazar and Marguerite stood motionless, she at the head, he at the foot of the bed, unable to believe in the death of the woman whose virtues and exhaustless tenderness were known fully to them alone. Father and daughter exchanged looks freighted with meaning: the daughter judged the father, and already the father trembled, foreseeing in his daughter an instrument of vengeance. Though memories of the love with which his Pépita had filled his life crowded upon his mind, and gave to her dying words a sacred authority whose voice his soul must ever hear, yet Balthazar knew himself helpless in the grasp of his attendant genius; he heard the terrible mutterings of his passion, denying him the strength to carry his repentance into action: he feared himself.

When the grave had closed upon Madame Claës, one thought filled the minds of all, — the house had had a soul, and that soul was now departed. The grief of the family was so intense that the parlor, where the noble woman still seemed to linger, was closed; no one had the courage to enter it.

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X.

Society practises none of the virtues it demands from individuals: every hour it commits crimes, but the crimes are committed in words; it paves the way for evil actions with a jest; it degrades nobility of soul by ridicule; it jeers at sons who mourn their fathers, anathematizes those who do not mourn them enough, and finds diversion (the hypocrite!) in weighing the dead bodies before they are cold.

The evening of the day on which Madame Claës died, her friends cast a few flowers upon her memory in the intervals of their games of whist, doing homage to her noble qualities as they sorted their hearts and spades. Then, after a few lachrymal phrases, — the fi, fo, fum of collective grief, uttered in precisely the same tone, and with neither more nor less of feeling, at all hours and in every town in France, — they proceeded to estimate the value of her property. Pierquin was the first to observe that the death of this excellent woman was a mercy, for her husband had made her unhappy; and it was even more fortunate for her children: she was unable while living to refuse her money to the husband

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she adored; but now that she was dead, Claës was debarred from touching it. Thereupon all present calculated the fortune of that poor Madame Claës, wondered how much she had laid by (had she, in fact, laid by anything?), made an inventory of her jewels, rummaged in her wardrobe, peeped into her drawers, while the afflicted family were still weeping and praying around her death-bed.

Pierquin, with an appraising eye, stated that Madame Claës's possessions in her own right — to use the notarial phrase — might still be recovered, and ought to amount to nearly a million and a half of francs; basing this estimate partly on the forest of Waignies, — whose timber, counting the full-grown trees, the saplings, the primeval growths, and the recent plantations, had immensely increased in value during the last twelve years, — and partly on Balthazar's own property, of which enough remained to "cover" the claims of his children, if the liquidation of their mother's fortune did not yield sufficient to release him. Mademoiselle Claës was still, in Pierquin's slang, "a four-hundred-thousand-franc girl." "But," he added, "if she does n't marry, — a step which would of course separate her interests and permit us to sell the forest at auction, and so realize the property of the minor children and reinvest it where the father can't lay hands on it, — Claës is likely to ruin them all."

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Thereupon, everybody looked about for some eligible young man worthy to win the hand of Mademoiselle Claës; but none of them paid the lawyer the compliment of suggesting that he might be the man. Pierquin, however, found so many good reasons to reject the suggested matches as unworthy of Marguerite's position, that the confabulators glanced at each other and smiled, and took malicious pleasure in prolonging this truly provincial method of annoyance. Pierquin had already decided that Madame Claës's death would have a favorable effect upon his suit, and he began mentally to cut up the body in his own interests.

"That good woman," he said to himself as he went home to bed, "was as proud as a peacock; she would never have given me her daughter. Hey, hey! why could n't I manage matters now so as to marry the girl? Père Claës is drunk on carbon, and takes no care of his children. If, after convincing Marguerite that she must marry to save the property of her brothers and sister, I were to ask him for his daughter, he will be glad to get rid of a girl who is likely to thwart him."

He went to sleep anticipating the charms of the marriage contract, and reflecting on the advantages of the step and the guarantees afforded for his happiness in the person he proposed to marry. In all the provinces there was certainly not a better brought-up or more delicately lovely young girl than Mademoiselle Claës. Her

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modesty, her grace, were like those of the pretty flower Emmanuel had feared to name lest he should betray the secret of his heart. Her sentiments were lofty, her principles religious, she would undoubtedly make him a a faithful wife; moreover, she not only flattered the vanity which influences every man more or less in the choice of a wife, but she gratified his pride by the high consideration which her family, doubly ennobled, enjoyed in Flanders, — a consideration which her husband of course would share.

The next day Pierquin extracted from his strong-box several thousand-franc notes, which he offered with great friendliness to Balthazar, so as to relieve him of pecuniary annoyance in the midst of his grief. Touched by this delicate attention, Balthazar would, he thought, praise his goodness and his personal qualities to Marguerite. In this he was mistaken. Monsieur Claës and his daughter thought it was a very natural action, and their sorrow was too absorbing to let them even think of the lawyer.

Balthazar's despair was indeed so great that persons who were disposed to blame his conduct could not do otherwise than forgive him, — less on account of the Science which might have excused him, than for the remorse which could not undo his deeds. Society is satisfied by appearances: it takes what it gives, without considering the intrinsic worth of the article. To

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the world real suffering is a show, a species of enjoyment, which inclines it to absolve even a criminal; in its thirst for emotions it acquits without judging the man who raises a laugh, or he who makes it weep, making no inquiry into their methods..

Marguerite was just nineteen when her father put her in charge of the household; and her brothers and sister, whom Madame Claës in her last moments exhorted to obey their elder sister, accepted her authority with docility. Her mourning attire heightened the dewy whiteness of her skin, just as the sadness of her expression threw into relief the gentleness and patience of her manner. From the first she gave proofs of feminine courage, of inalterable serenity, like that of angels appointed to shed peace on suffering hearts by a touch of their waving palms. But although she trained herself, through a premature perception of duty, to hide her personal grief, it was none the less bitter; her calm exterior was not in keeping with the deep trouble of her thoughts, and she was destined to undergo, too early in life, those terrible outbursts of feeling which no heart is able wholly to subdue: her father was to hold her incessantly under the pressure of natural youthful generosity on the one hand, and the dictates of imperious duty on the other. The cares which came upon her the very day of her mother's death threw her into a struggle with the interests of life at an age when young girls are

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thinking only of its pleasures. Dreadful discipline of suffering, which is never lacking to angelic natures!

The love which rests on money or on vanity is the most persevering of passions. Pierquin resolved to win the heiress without delay. A few days after Madame Claës's death he took occasion to speak to Marguerite, and began operations with a cleverness which might have succeeded if love had not given her the power of clear insight and saved her from mistaking appearances that were all the more specious because Pierquin displayed his natural kindheartedness, — the kindliness of a notary who thinks himself loving while he protects a client's money. Relying on his rather distant relationship and his constant habit of managing the business and sharing the secrets of the Claës family, sure of the esteem and friendship of the father, greatly assisted by the careless inattention of that servant of science who took no thought for the marriage of his daughter, and not suspecting that Marguerite could prefer another, — Pierquin unguardedly enabled her to form a judgment on a suit in which there was no passion except that of self-interest, always odious to a young soul, and which he was not clever enough to conceal. It was he who on this occasion was naïvely aboveboard, it was she who dissimulated, — simply because he thought he was dealing with a defenceless girl, and wholly misconceived the privileges of weakness.

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"My dear cousin," he said to Marguerite, with whom he was walking about the paths of the little garden, "you know my heart, you understand how truly I desire to respect the painful feelings which absorb you at this moment. I have too sensitive a nature for a lawyer; I live by my heart only, I am forced to spend my time on the interests of others when I would fain let myself enjoy the sweet emotions which make life happy. I suffer deeply in being obliged to talk to you of subjects so discordant with your state of mind, but it is necessary. I have thought much about you during the last few days. It is evident that through a fatal delusion the fortune of your brothers and sister and your own are in jeopardy. Do you wish to save your family from complete ruin?"

"What must I do?" she asked, half-frightened by his words.

"Marry," answered Pierquin.

"I shall not marry," she said.

"Yes, you will marry," replied the notary, "when you have soberly thought over the critical position in which you are placed."

"How can my marriage save —"

"Ah! I knew you would consider it, my dear cousin," he exclaimed, interrupting her. "Marriage will emancipate you."

"Why should I be emancipated?" asked Marguerite.

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"Because marriage will put you at once into possession of your property, my dear little cousin," said the lawyer in a tone of triumph. "If you marry you take your share of your mother's property. To give it to you, the whole property must be liquidated; to do that, it becomes necessary to sell the forest of Waignies. That done, the proceeds will be capitalized, and your father, as guardian, will be compelled to invest the fortune of his children in such a way that Chemistry can't get hold of it."

"And if I do not marry, what will happen?" she asked.

"Well," said the notary, "your father will manage your estate as he pleases. If he returns to making gold, he will probably sell the timber of the forest of Waignies and leave his children as naked as the little Saint Johns. The forest is now worth about fourteen hundred thousand francs; but from one day to another you are not sure your father won't cut it down, and then your thirteen hundred acres are not worth three hundred thousand francs. Is n't it better to avoid this almost certain danger by at once compelling the division of property on your marriage? If the forest is sold now, while Chemistry has gone to sleep, your father will put the proceeds on the Grand-Livre. The Funds are at 59; those dear children will get nearly five thousand francs a year for every fifty thousand

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francs: and, inasmuch as the property of minors cannot be sold out, your brothers and sister will find their fortunes doubled in value by the time they come of age. Whereas, in the other case, — faith, no one knows what may happen: your father has already impaired your mother's property; we shall find out the deficit when we come to make the inventory. If he is in debt to her estate, you will take a mortgage on his, and in that way something may be recovered — "

"For shame!" said Marguerite. "It would be an outrage on my father. It is not so long since my mother uttered her last words that I have forgotten them. My father is incapable of robbing his children," she continued, giving way to tears of distress. "You misunderstand him, Monsieur Pierquin."

"But, my dear cousin, if your father gets back to chemistry — "

"We are ruined; is that what you mean?"

"Yes, utterly ruined. Believe me, Marguerite," he said, taking her hand which he placed upon his heart, "I should fail of my duty if I did not persist in this matter. Your interests alone — "

"Monsieur," said Marguerite, coldly withdrawing her hand, "the true interests of my family require me not to marry. My mother thought so."

"Cousin," he cried, with the earnestness of a man

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who sees a fortune escaping him, "you commit suicide; you fling your mother's property into a gulf. Well, I will prove the devotion I feel for you: you know not how I love you. I have admired you from the day of that last ball, three years ago; you were enchanting. Trust the voice of love when it speaks to you of your own interests, Marguerite." He paused. "Yes, we must call a family council and emancipate you — without consulting you," he added.

"But what is it to be emancipated?"

"It is to enjoy your own rights."

"If I can be emancipated without being married, why do you want me to marry? and whom should I marry?"

Pierquin tried to look tenderly at his cousin, but the expression contrasted so strongly with his hard eyes, usually fixed on money, that Marguerite discovered the self-interest in his improvised tenderness.

"You would marry the person who — pleases you — the most," he said. "A husband is indispensable, were it only as a matter of business. You are now entering upon a struggle with your father; can you resist him all alone?"

"Yes, monsieur; I shall know how to protect my brothers and sister when the time comes."

"Pshaw! the obstinate creature," thought Pierquin. "No, you will not resist him," he said aloud.

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"Let us end the subject," she said.

"Adieu, cousin, I shall endeavor to serve you in spite of yourself; I will prove my love by protecting you against your will from a disaster which all the town foresees."

"I thank you for the interest you take in me," she answered; "but I entreat you to propose nothing and to undertake nothing which may give pain to my father."

Marguerite stood thoughtfully watching Pierquin as he departed; she compared his metallic voice, his manners, flexible as a steel spring, his glance, servile rather than tender, with the mute melodious poetry in which Emmanuel's sentiments were wrapped. No matter what may be said, or what may be done, there exists a wonderful magnetism whose effects never deceive. The tones of the voice, the glance, the passionate gestures of a lover may be imitated; a young girl can be deluded by a clever comedian; but to succeed, the man must be alone in the field. If the young girl has another soul beside her whose pulses vibrate in unison with hers, she is able to distinguish the expressions of a true love. Emmanuel, like Marguerite, felt the influence of the clouds which, from the time of their first meeting had gathered ominously about their heads, hiding from their eyes the blue skies of love. His feeling for the Elect of his

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heart was an idolatry which the total absence of hope rendered gentle and mysterious in its manifestations. Socially too far removed from Mademoiselle Claës by his want of fortune, with nothing but a noble name to offer her, he saw no chance of ever being her husband. Yet he had always hoped for certain encouragements which Marguerite refused to give before the failing eyes of her dying mother. Both equally pure, they had never said to one another a word of love. Their joys were solitary joys tasted by each alone. They trembled apart, though together they quivered beneath the rays of the same hope. They seemed to fear themselves, conscious that each only too surely belonged to the other. Emmanuel trembled lest he should touch the hand of the sovereign to whom he had made a shrine in his heart; a chance contact would have roused hopes that were too ardent, he could not then have mastered the force of his passion. And yet, while neither bestowed the vast, though trivial, the innocent and yet all-meaning signs of love that even timid lovers allow themselves, they were so firmly fixed in each other's hearts that both were ready to make the greatest sacrifices, which were, indeed, the only pleasures their love could expect to taste.

Since Madame Claës's death this hidden love was shrouded in mourning. The tints of the sphere in which it lived, dark and dim from the first, were now black;

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the few lights were veiled by tears. Marguerite's reserve changed to coldness; she remembered the promise exacted by her mother. With more freedom of action, she nevertheless became more distant. Emmanuel shared his beloved's grief, comprehending that the slightest word or wish of love at such a time transgressed the laws of the heart. Their love was therefore more concealed than it had ever been. These tender souls sounded the same note: held apart by grief, as formerly by the timidities of youth and by respect for the sufferings of the mother, they clung to the magnificent language of the eyes, the mute eloquence of devoted actions, the constant unison of thoughts, — divine harmonies of youth, the first steps of a love still in its infancy. Emmanuel came every morning to inquire for Claës and Marguerite, but he never entered the dining-room, where the family now sat, unless to bring a letter from Gabriel or when Balthazar invited him to come in. His first glance at the young girl contained a thousand sympathetic thoughts; it told her that he suffered under these conventional restraints, that he never left her, he was always with her, he shared her grief. He shed the tears of his own pain into the soul of his dear one by a look that was marred by no selfish reservation. His good heart lived so completely in the present, he clung so firmly to a happiness which he believed to be fugitive, that Marguerite sometimes reproached herself for

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not generously holding out her hand and saying, "Let us at least be friends."

Pierquin continued his suit with an obstinacy which is the unreflecting patience of fools. He judged Marguerite by the ordinary rules of the multitude when judging of women. He believed that the words marriage, freedom, fortune, which he had put into her mind, would germinate and flower into wishes by which he could profit; he imagined that her coldness was mere dissimulation. But surround her as he would with gallant attentions, he could not hide the despotic ways of a man accustomed to manage the private affairs of many families with a high hand. He discoursed to her in those platitudes of consolation common to his profession, which crawl like snails over the suffering mind, leaving behind them a trail of barren words which profane its sanctity. His tenderness was mere wheedling. He dropped his feigned melancholy at the door when he put on his overshoes, or took his umbrella. He used the tone his long intimacy authorized as an instrument to work himself still further into the bosom of the family, and bring Marguerite to a marriage which the whole town was beginning to foresee. The true, devoted, respectful, love formed a striking contrast to its selfish, calculating semblance. Each man's conduct was homogeneous: one feigned a passion and seized every advantage to obtain the prize; the other

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hid his love and trembled lest he should betray his devotion.

Some time after the death of her mother, and, as it happened, on the same day, Marguerite was enabled to compare the only two men of whom she had any opportunity of judging; for the social solitude to which she was condemned kept her from seeing life and gave no access to those who might think of her in marriage. One day after breakfast, on a fine morning in April, Emmanuel called at the house just as Monsieur Claës was going out. The aspect of his own house was so unendurable to Balthazar that he spent part of every day in walking about the ramparts. Emmanuel made a motion as if to follow him, then he hesitated, seemed to gather up his courage, looked at Marguerite and remained. The young girl felt sure that he wished to speak with her, and asked him to go into the garden; then she sent Félicie to Martha, who was sewing in the antechamber on the upper floor, and seated herself on a garden-seat in full view of her sister and the old duenna.

"Monsieur Claës is as much absorbed by grief as he once was by science," began the young man, watching Balthazar as he slowly crossed the court-yard. "Every one in Douai pities him; he moves like a man who has lost all consciousness of life; he stops without a purpose, he gazes without seeing anything."

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"Every sorrow has its own expression," said Marguerite, checking her tears. "What is it you wish to say to me?" she added after a pause, coldly and with dignity.

"Mademoiselle," answered Emmanuel in a voice of feeling, "I scarcely know if I have the right to speak to you as I am about to do? Think only of my desire to be of service to you, and give me the right of a teacher to be interested in the future of a pupil. Your brother Gabriel is over fifteen; he is in the second class; it is now necessary to direct his studies in the line of whatever future career he may take up. It is for your father to decide what that career shall be: if he gives the matter no thought, the injury to Gabriel will be serious. But then, again, would it not mortify your father if you showed him that he is neglecting his son's interests? Under these circumstances, could you not yourself consult Gabriel as to his tastes, and help him to choose a career, so that later, if his father should think of making him a public officer, an administrator, a soldier, he might be prepared with some special training? I do not suppose that either you or Monsieur Claës would wish to bring Gabriel up in idleness."

"Oh, no!" said Marguerite; "when my mother taught us to make lace, and took such pains with our drawing and music and embroidery, she often said

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we must be prepared for whatever might happen to us. Gabriel ought to have a thorough education and a personal value. But tell me, what career is the best for a man to choose?"

"Mademoiselle," said Emmanuel, trembling with pleasure, "Gabriel is at the head of his class in mathematics; if he would like to enter the École Polytechnique, he could there acquire the practical knowledge which will fit him for any career. When he leaves the École he can choose the path in life for which he feels the strongest bias. Thus, without compromising his future, you will have saved a great deal of time. Men who leave the École with honors are sought after on all sides; the school turns out statesmen, diplomats, men of science, engineers, generals, sailors, magistrates, manufacturers, and bankers. There is nothing extraordinary in the son of a rich or noble family preparing himself to enter it. If Gabriel decides on this course I shall ask you to — will you grant my request? Say yes!"

"What is it?"

"Let me be his tutor," he answered, trembling.

Marguerite looked at Monsieur de Solis; then she took his hand, and said, "Yes" — and paused, adding presently in a broken voice: —

"How much I value the delicacy which makes you offer me a thing I can accept from you. In all

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that you have said I see how much you have thought for us. I thank you."

Though the words were simply said, Emmanuel turned away his head not to show the tears that the delight of being useful to her brought to his eyes.

"I will bring both boys to see you," he said, when he was a little calmer; "to-morrow is a holiday."

He rose and bowed to Marguerite, who followed him into the house; when he had crossed the court-yard he turned and saw her still at the door of the dining-room, from which she made him a friendly sign.

After dinner Pierquin came to see Monsieur Claës, and sat down between father and daughter on the very bench in the garden where Emmanuel had sat that morning.

"My dear cousin," he said to Balthazar, "I have come to-night to talk to you on business. It is now forty-two days since the decease of your wife."

"I keep no account of time," said Balthazar, wiping away the tears that came at the word "decease."

"Oh, monsieur!" cried Marguerite, looking at the lawyer, "how can you?"

"But, my dear Marguerite, we notaries are obliged to consider the limits of time appointed by law. This is a matter which concerns you and your co-heirs. Monsieur Claës has none but minor children, and he must make an inventory of his property within forty-

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five days of his wife's decease, so as to render in his accounts at the end of that time. It is necessary to know the value of his property before deciding whether to accept it as sufficient security, or whether we must fall back on the legal rights of minors."

Marguerite rose.

"Do not go away, my dear cousin," continued Pierquin; "my words concern you — you and your father both. You know how truly I share your grief, but to-day you must give your attention to legal details. If you do not, every one of you will get into serious difficulties. I am only doing my duty as the family lawyer."

"He is right," said Claës.

"The time expires in two days," resumed Pierquin; "and I must begin the inventory to-morrow, if only to postpone the payment of the legacy-tax which the public treasurer will come here and demand. Treasurers have no hearts; they don't trouble themselves about feelings; they fasten their claws upon us at all seasons. Therefore for the next two days my clerk and I will be here from ten till four with Monsieur Raparlier, the public appraiser. After we get through the town property we shall go into the country. As for the forest of Waignies, we shall be obliged to hold a consultation about that. Now let us turn to another matter. We must call a family council and appoint a guardian to

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protect the interests of the minor children. Monsieur Conyncks of Bruges is your nearest relative; but he has now become a Belgian. You ought," continued Pierquin, addressing Balthazar, "to write to him on this matter; you can then find out if he has any intention of settling in France, where he has a fine property. Perhaps you could persuade him and his daughter to move into French Flanders. If he refuses, then I must see about making up the council with the other near relatives."

"What is the use of an inventory?" asked Marguerite.

"To put on record the value and the claims of the property, its debts and its assets. When that is all clearly scheduled, the family council, acting on behalf of the minors, makes such dispositions as it sees fit."

"Pierquin," said Claës, rising from the bench, "do all that is necessary to protect the rights of my children; but spare us the distress of selling the things that belonged to my dear—" he was unable to continue; but he spoke with so noble an air and in a tone of such deep feeling that Marguerite took her father's hand and kissed it.

"To-morrow, then," said Pierquin.

"Come to breakfast," said Claës; then he seemed to gather his scattered senses together and exclaimed:

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"But in my marriage contract, which was drawn under the laws of Hainault, I released my wife from the obligation of making an inventory, in order that she might not be annoyed by it: it is very probable that I was equally released — "

"Oh, what happiness!" cried Marguerite. "It would have been so distressing to us."

"Well, I will look into your marriage contract to-morrow," said the notary, rather confused.

"Then you did not know of this?" said Marguerite.

This remark closed the interview; the lawyer was far too much confused to continue it after the young girl's comment.

"The devil is in it!" he said to himself as he crossed the court-yard. "That man's wandering memory comes back to him in the nick of time, — just when he needed it to hinder us from taking precautions against him! I have cracked my brains to save the property of those children. I meant to proceed regularly and come to an understanding with old Conyncks, and here's the end of it! I shall lose ground with Marguerite, for she will certainly ask her father why I wanted an inventory of the property, which she now sees was not necessary; and Claës will tell her that notaries have a passion for writing documents, that we are lawyers above all, above cousins or friends or relatives, and all such stuff as that."

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He slammed the street door violently, railing at clients who ruin themselves by sensitiveness.

Balthazar was right. No inventory could be made. Nothing, therefore, was done to settle the relation of the father to the children in the matter of property.

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XI.

Several months went by and brought no change to the House of Claës. Gabriel, under the wise management of his tutor, Monsieur de Solis, worked studiously, acquired foreign languages, and prepared to pass the necessary examinations to enter the École Polytechnique. Marguerite and Félicie lived in absolute retirement, going in summer to their father's country place as a measure of economy. Monsieur Claës attended to his business affairs, paid his debts by borrowing a considerable sum of money on his property, and went to see the forest at Waignies.

About the middle of the year 1817, his grief, slowly abating, left him a prey to solitude and defenceless under the monotony of the life he was leading, which heavily oppressed him. At first he struggled bravely against the allurements of Science as they gradually beset him; he forbade himself even to think of Chemistry. Then he did think of it. Still, he would not actively take it up, and only gave his mind to his researches theoretically. Such constant study, however, swelled his passion which soon became exacting. He asked

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himself whether he was really bound not to continue his researches, and remembered that his wife had refused his oath. Though he had pledged his word to himself that he would never pursue the solution of the great Problem, might he not change that determination at a moment when he foresaw success ? He was now fifty-nine years old. At that age a predominant idea contracts a certain peevish fixedness which is the first stage of monomania.

Circumstances conspired against his tottering loyalty. The peace which Europe now enjoyed encouraged the circulation of discoveries and scientific ideas acquired during the war by the learned of various countries, who for nearly twenty years had been unable to hold communication. Science was making great strides. Claës found that the progress of chemistry had been directed, unknown to chemists themselves, towards the object of his researches. Learned men devoted to the higher sciences thought, as he did, that light, heat, electricity, galvanism, magnetism were all different effects of the same cause, and that the difference existing between substances hitherto considered simple must be produced by varying proportions of an unknown principle. The fear that some other chemist might effect the reduction of metals and discover the constituent principle of electricity, — two achievements which would lead to the solution of the chemical Absolute, —

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increased what the people of Douai called a mania, and drove his desires to a paroxysm conceivable to those who devote themselves to the sciences, or who have ever known the tyranny of ideas.

Thus it happened that Balthazar was again carried away by a passion all the more violent because it had lain dormant so long. Marguerite, who watched every evidence of her father's state of mind, opened the long-closed parlor. By living in it she recalled the painful memories which her mother's death had caused, and succeeded for a time in re-awaking her father's grief, and retarding his plunge into the gulf to the depths of which he was, nevertheless, doomed to fall. She determined to go into society and force Balthazar to share in its distractions. Several good marriages were proposed to her, which occupied Claës's mind, but to all of them she replied that she should not marry until after she was twenty-five. But in spite of his daughter's efforts, in spite of his remorseful struggles, Balthazar, at the beginning of the winter, returned secretly to his researches. It was difficult, however, to hide his operations from the inquisitive women in the kitchen; and one morning Martha, while dressing Marguerite, said to her: —

"Mademoiselle, we are as good as lost. That monster of a Mulquinier — who is a devil disguised, for I never saw him make the sign of the cross — has gone

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back to the garret. There's monsieur on the high-road to hell. Pray God he may n't kill you as he killed my poor mistress."

"It is not possible!" exclaimed Marguerite.

"Come and see the signs of their traffic."

Mademoiselle Claës ran to the window and saw the light smoke rising from the flue of the laboratory.

"I shall be twenty-one in a few months," she thought, "and I shall know how to oppose the destruction of our property."

In giving way to his passion Balthazar necessarily felt less respect for the interests of his children than he formerly had felt for the happiness of his wife. The barriers were less high, his conscience was more elastic, his passion had increased in strength. He now set forth in his career of glory, toil, hope, and poverty, with the fervor of a man profoundly trustful of his convictions. Certain of the result, he worked night and day with a fury that alarmed his daughters, who did not know how little a man is injured by work that gives him pleasure.

Her father had no sooner recommenced his experiments than Marguerite retrenched the superfluities of the table, showing a parsimony worthy of a miser, in which Josette and Martha admirably seconded her. Claës never noticed the change which reduced the household living to the merest necessaries. First he

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ceased to breakfast with the family; then he only left his laboratory when dinner was ready; and at last, before he went to bed, he would sit some hours in the parlor between his daughters without saying a word to either of them; when he rose to go upstairs they wished him good-night, and he allowed them mechanically to kiss him on both cheeks. Such conduct would have led to great domestic misfortunes had Marguerite not been prepared to exercise the authority of a mother, and if, moreover, she were not protected by a secret love from the dangers of so much liberty.

Pierquin had ceased to come to the house, judging that the family ruin would soon be complete. Balthazar's rural estates, which yielded sixteen thousand francs a year, and were worth about six hundred thousand, were now encumbered by mortgages to the amount of three hundred thousand francs; for, in order to recommence his researches, Claës had borrowed a considerable sum of money. The rents were exactly enough to pay the interest of the mortgages; but, with the improvidence of a man who is the slave of an idea, he made over the income from his farm lands to Marguerite for the expenses of the household, and the notary calculated that three years would suffice to bring matters to a crisis, when the law would step in and eat up all that Balthazar had not squandered. Marguerite's coldness brought Pierquin to a state of almost hostile

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indifference. To give himself an appearance in the eyes of the world of having renounced her hand, he frequently remarked of the Claës family in a tone of compassion: —

"Those poor people are ruined; I have done my best to save them. Well, it can't be helped; Mademoiselle Claës refused to employ the legal means which might have rescued them from poverty."

Emmanuel de Solis, who was now principal of the college-school in Douai, thanks to the influence of his uncle and to his own merits which made him worthy of the post, came every evening to see the two young girls, who called the old duenna into the parlor as soon as their father had gone to bed. Emmanuel's gentle rap at the street-door was never missing. For the last three months, encouraged by the gracious, though mute gratitude with which Marguerite now accepted his attentions, he became at his ease, and was seen for what he was. The brightness of his pure spirit shone like a flawless diamond; Marguerite learned to understand its strength and its constancy when she saw how inexhaustible was the source from which it came. She loved to watch the unfolding, one by one, of the blossoms of his heart, whose perfume she had already breathed. Each day Emmanuel realized some one of Marguerite's hopes, and illumined the enchanted regions of love with new lights that chased away the clouds and brought to view

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the serene heavens, giving color to the fruitful riches hidden away in the shadow of their lives. More at his ease, the young man could display the seductive qualities of his heart until now discreetly hidden, the expansive gayety of his age, the simplicity which comes of a life of study, the treasures of a delicate mind that life has not adulterated, the innocent joyousness which goes so well with loving youth. His soul and Marguerite's understood each other better; they went together to the depths of their hearts and found in each the same thoughts, — pearls of equal lustre, sweet fresh harmonies like those the legends tell of beneath the waves, which fascinate the divers. They made themselves known to one another by an interchange of thought, a reciprocal introspection which bore the signs, in both, of exquisite sensibility. It was done without false shame, but not without mutual coquetry. The two hours which Emmanuel spent with the sisters and old Martha enabled Marguerite to accept the life of anguish and renunciation on which she had entered. This artless, progressive love was her support. In all his testimonies of affection Emmanuel showed the natural grace that is so winning, the sweet yet subtile mind which breaks the uniformity of sentiment as the facets of a diamond relieve, by their many-sided fires, the monotony of the stone, — adorable wisdom, the secret of loving hearts, which makes a woman pliant to the artistic hand that gives new life to

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old, old forms, and refreshes with novel modulations the phrases of love. Love is not only a sentiment, it is an art. Some simple word, a trifling vigilance, a nothing, reveals to a woman the great, the divine artist who shall touch her heart and yet not blight it. The more Emmanuel was free to utter himself, the more charming were the expressions of his love.

"I have tried to get here before Pierquin," he said to Marguerite one evening. "He is bringing some bad news; I would rather you heard it from me. Your father has sold all the timber in your forest at Waignies to speculators, who have resold it to dealers. The trees are already felled, and the logs are carried away. Monsieur Claës received three hundred thousand francs in cash as a first instalment of the price, which he has used towards paying his bills in Paris; but to clear off his debts entirely he has been forced to assign a hundred thousand francs of the three hundred thousand still due to him on the purchase-money."

Pierquin entered at this moment.

"Ah! my dear cousin," he said, "you are ruined. I told you how it would be; but you would not listen to me. Your father has an insatiable appetite. He has swallowed your woods at a mouthful. Your family guardian, Monsieur Conyncks, is just now absent in Amsterdam, and Claës has seized the opportunity to strike the blow. It is all wrong. I have written to

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Monsieur Conyncks, but he will get here too late; everything will be squandered. You will be obliged to sue your father. The suit can't be long, but it will be dishonorable. Monsieur Conyncks has no alternative but to institute proceedings; the law requires it. This is the result of your obstinacy. Do you now see my prudence, and how devoted I was to your interests?"

"I bring you some good news, mademoiselle," said young de Solis in his gentle voice. "Gabriel has been admitted to the École Polytechnique. The difficulties that seemed in the way have all been removed."

Marguerite thanked him with a smile as she said: —

"My savings will now come in play! Martha, we must begin to-morrow on Gabriel's outfit. My poor Félicie, we shall have to work hard," she added, kissing her sister's forehead.

"To-morrow you shall have him at home, to remain ten days," said Emmanuel; "he must be in Paris by the fifteenth of November."

"My cousin Gabriel has done a sensible thing," said the lawyer, eyeing the professor from head to foot; "for he will have to make his own way. But, my dear cousin, the question now is how to save the honor of the family: will you listen to what I say this time?"

"No," she said, "not if it relates to marriage."

"Then what will you do?"

"I? — nothing."

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"But you are of age."

"I shall be in a few days. Have you any course to suggest to me," she added, "which will reconcile our interests with the duty we owe to our father and to the honor of the family?"

"My dear cousin, nothing can be done till your uncle arrives. When he does, I will call again."

"Adieu, monsieur," said Marguerite.

"The poorer she is the more airs she gives herself," thought the notary. "Adieu, mademoiselle," he said aloud. "Monsieur, my respects to you;" and he went away, paying no attention to Félicie or Martha.

"I have been studying the Code for the last two days, and I have consulted an experienced old lawyer, a friend of my uncle," said Emmanuel, in a hesitating voice. "If you will allow me, I will go to Amsterdam to-morrow and see Monsieur Conyncks. Listen, dear Marguerite —"

He uttered her name for the first time; she thanked him with a smile and a tearful glance, and made a gentle inclination of her head. He paused, looking at Félicie and Martha.

"Speak before my sister," said Marguerite. "She is so docile and courageous that she does not need this discussion to make her resigned to our life of toil and privation; but it is best that she should see for herself how necessary courage is to us."

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The two sisters clasped hands and kissed each other, as if to renew some pledge of union before the coming disaster.

"Leave us, Martha."

"Dear Marguerite," said Emmanuel, letting the happiness he felt in conquering the lesser rights of affection sound in the inflections of his voice, "I have procured the names and addresses of the purchasers who still owe the remaining two hundred thousand francs on the felled timber. To-morrow, if you give consent, a lawyer acting in the name of Monsieur Conyncks, who will not disavow the act, will serve an injunction upon them. Six days hence, by which time your uncle will have returned, the family council can be called together, and Gabriel put in possession of his legal rights, for he is now eighteen. You and your brother being thus authorized to use those rights, you will demand your share in the proceeds of the timber. Monsieur Claës cannot refuse you the two hundred thousand francs on which the injunction will have been put; as to the remaining hundred thousand which is due to you, you must obtain a mortgage on this house. Monsieur Conyncks will demand securities for the three hundred thousand belonging to Félicie and Jean. Under these circumstances your father will be obliged to mortgage his property on the plain of Orchies, which he has already encumbered to the amount of

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three hundred thousand francs. The law gives a retrospective priority to the claims of minors; and that will save you. Monsieur Claës's hands will be tied for the future; your property becomes inalienable, and he can no longer borrow on his own estates because they will be held as security for other sums. Moreover, the whole can be done quietly, without scandal or legal proceedings. Your father will be forced to greater prudence in making his researches, even if he cannot be persuaded to relinquish them altogether."

"Yes," said Marguerite, "but where, meantime, can we find the means of living? The hundred thousand francs for which, you say, I must obtain a mortgage on this house, would bring in nothing while we still live here. The proceeds of my father's property in the country will pay the interest on the three hundred thousand francs he owes to others; but how are we to live?"

"In the first place," said Emmanuel, "by investing the fifty thousand francs which belong to Gabriel in the public Funds you will get, according to present rates, more than four thousand francs' income, which will suffice to pay your brother's board and lodging and all his other expenses in Paris. Gabriel cannot touch the capital until he is of age, therefore you need not fear that he will waste a penny of it, and you will have one expense the less. Besides, you will have your own fifty thousand."

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"My father will ask me for them," she said in a frightened tone; "and I shall not be able to refuse him."

"Well, dear Marguerite, even so, you can evade that by robbing yourself. Place your money in the Grand-Livre in Gabriel's name: it will bring you twelve or thirteen thousand francs a year. Minors who are emancipated cannot sell property without permission of the family council; you will thus gain three years' peace of mind. By that time your father will either have solved his problem or renounced it; and Gabriel, then of age, will reinvest the money in your own name."

Marguerite made him explain to her once more the legal points which she did not at first understand. It was certainly a novel sight to see this pair of lovers poring over the Code, which Emmanuel had brought with him to show his mistress the laws which protected the property of minors; she quickly caught the meaning of them, thanks to the natural penetration of women, which in this case love still further sharpened.

Gabriel came home to his father's house on the following day. When Monsieur de Solis brought him up to Balthazar and told of his admission to the École Polytechnique, the father thanked the professor with a wave of his hand, and said: —

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"I am very glad; Gabriel may become a man of science."

"Oh, my brother," cried Marguerite, as Balthazar went back to his laboratory, "work hard, waste no money; spend what is necessary, but practise economy. On the days when you are allowed to go out, pass your time with our friends and relations; contract none of the habits which ruin young men in Paris. Your expenses will amount to nearly three thousand francs, and that will leave you a thousand francs for your pocket-money; that is surely enough."

"I will answer for him," said Emmanuel de Solis, laying his hand on his pupil's shoulder.

A month later, Monsieur Conyncks, in conjunction with Marguerite, had obtained all necessary securities from Claës. The plan so wisely proposed by Emmanuel de Solis was fully approved and executed. Face to face with the law, and in presence of his cousin, whose stern sense of honor allowed no compromise, Balthazar, ashamed of the sale of the timber to which he had consented at a moment when he was harassed by creditors, submitted to all that was demanded of him. Glad to repair the almost involuntary wrong that he had done to his children, he signed the deeds in a preoccupied way. He was now as careless and improvident as a negro who sells his wife in the morning for a drop of brandy, and cries for her at night. He gave no

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thought to even the immediate future, and never asked himself what resources he would have when his last ducat was melted up. He pursued his work and continued his purchases, apparently unaware that he was now no more than the titular owner of his house and lands, and that he could not, thanks to the severity of the laws, raise another penny upon a property of which he was now, as it were, the legal guardian.

The year 1818 ended without bringing any new misfortune. The sisters paid the costs of Jean's education and met all the expenses of the household out of the thirteen thousand francs a year from the sum placed in the Grand-Livre in Gabriel's name, which he punctually remitted to them. Monsieur de Solis lost his uncle, the abbé, in December of that year.

Early in January Marguerite learned through Martha that her father had sold his collection of tulips, also the furniture of the front house, and all the family silver. She was obliged to buy back the spoons and forks that were necessary for the daily service of the table, and these she now ordered to be stamped with her initials. Until that day Marguerite had kept silence towards her father on the subject of his depredations, but that evening after dinner she requested Félicie to leave her alone with him, and when he seated himself as usual by the corner of the parlor fireplace, she said: —

"My dear father, you are the master here, and can

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sell everything, even your children. We are ready to obey you without a murmur; but I am forced to tell you that we are without money, that we have barely enough to live on, and that Félicie and I are obliged to work night and day to pay for the schooling of little Jean with the price of the lace dress we are now making. My dear father, I implore you to give up your researches."

"You are right, my dear child; in six weeks they will be finished; I shall have found the Absolute, or the Absolute will be proved undiscoverable. You will have millions —"

"Give us meanwhile the bread to eat," replied Marguerite.

"Bread? is there no bread here?" said Claës, with a frightened air. "No bread in the house of a Claës! What has become of our property?"

"You have cut down the forest of Waignies. The ground has not been cleared and is therefore unproductive. As for your farms at Orchies, the rents scarcely suffice to pay the interest of the sums you have borrowed —"

"Then what are we living on?" he demanded.

Marguerite held up her needle and continued: —

"Gabriel's income helps us, but it is insufficient; I can make both ends meet at the close of the year if you do not overwhelm me with bills that I do not expect,

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for purchases you tell me nothing about. When I think I have enough to meet my quarterly expenses some unexpected bill for potash, or zinc, or sulphur, is brought to me."

"My dear child, have patience for six weeks; after that, I will be judicious. My little Marguerite, you shall see wonders."

"It is time you should think of your affairs. You have sold everything, — pictures, tulips, plate; nothing is left. At least, refrain from making debts."

"I don't wish to make any more!" he said.

"Any more?" she cried, "then you have some?"

"Mere trifles," he said, but he dropped his eyes and colored.

For the first time in her life Marguerite felt humiliated by the lowering of her father's character, and suffered from it so much that she dared not question him.

A month after this scene one of the Douai bankers brought a bill of exchange for ten thousand francs signed by Claës. Marguerite asked the banker to wait a day, and expressed her regret that she had not been notified to prepare for this payment; whereupon he informed her that the house of Protez and Chiffreville held nine other bills to the same amount, falling due in consecutive months.

"All is over!" cried Marguerite, "the time has come."

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She sent for her father, and walked up and down the parlor with hasty steps, talking to herself: —

"A hundred thousand francs!" she cried. "I must find them, or see my father in prison. What am I to do?"

Balthazar did not come. Weary of waiting for him, Marguerite went up to the laboratory. As she entered she saw him in the middle of an immense, brilliantly-lighted room, filled with machinery and dusty glass vessels: here and there were books, and tables encumbered with specimens and products ticketed and numbered. On all sides the disorder of scientific pursuits contrasted strongly with Flemish habits. This litter of retorts and vaporizers, metals, fantastically colored crystals, specimens hooked upon the walls or lying on the furnaces, surrounded the central figure of Balthazar Claës, without a coat, his arms bare like those of a workman, his breast exposed, and showing the white hairs which covered it. His eyes were gazing with horrible fixity at a pneumatic trough. The receiver of this instrument was covered with a lens made of double convex glasses, the space between the glasses being filled with alchohol, which focussed the light coming through one of the compartments of the rose-window of the garret. The shelf of the receiver communicated with the wire of an immense galvanic battery. Lemulquinier, busy at the moment in moving the pedestal of

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the machine, which was placed on a movable axle so as to keep the lens in a perpendicular direction to the rays of the sun, turned round, his face black with dust, and called out, —

"Ha! mademoiselle, don't come in."

The aspect of her father, half-kneeling beside the instrument, and receiving the full strength of the sunlight upon his head, the protuberances of his skull, its scanty hairs resembling threads of silver, his face contracted by the agonies of expectation, the strangeness of the objects that surrounded him, the obscurity of parts of the vast garret from which fantastic engines seemed about to spring, all contributed to startle Marguerite, who said to herself, in terror, —

"He is mad!"

Then she went up to him and whispered in his ear, "Send away Lemulquinier."

"No, no, my child; I want him: I am in the midst of an experiment no one has yet thought of. For the last three days we have been watching for every ray of sun. I now have the means of submitting metals, in a complete vacuum, to concentrated solar fires and to electric currents. At this very moment the most powerful action a chemist can employ is about to show results which I alone —"

"My father, instead of vaporizing metals you should employ them in paying your notes of hand —"

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"Wait, wait!"

"Monsieur Mersktus has been here, father; and he must have ten thousand francs by four o'clock."

"Yes, yes, presently. True, I did sign a little note which is payable this month. I felt sure I should have found the Absolute. Good God! If I could only have a July sun the experiment would be successful."

He grasped his head and sat down on an old cane chair; a few tears rolled from his eyes.

"Monsieur is quite right," said Lemulquinier; "it is all the fault of that rascally sun which is too feeble, — the coward, the lazy thing!"

Master and valet paid no further attention to Marguerite.

"Leave us, Mulquinier," she said.

"Ah! I see a new experiment!" cried Claës.

"Father, lay aside your experiments," said his daughter, when they were alone. "You have one hundred thousand francs to pay, and we have not a penny. Leave your laboratory; your honor is in question. What will become of you if you are put in prison? Will you soil your white hairs and the name of Claës with the disgrace of bankruptcy? I will not allow it. I shall have strength to oppose your madness; it would be dreadful to see you without bread in your old age. Open your eyes to our position; see reason at last!"

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"Madness!" cried Balthazar, struggling to his feet. He fixed his luminous eyes upon his daughter, crossed his arms on his breast, and repeated the word "Madness!" so majestically that Marguerite trembled.

"Ah!" he cried, "your mother would never have uttered that word to me. She was not ignorant of the importance of my researches; she learned a science to understand me; she recognized that I toiled for the human race; she knew there was nothing sordid or selfish in my aims. The feelings of a loving wife are higher, I see it now, than filial affection. Yes, Love is above all other feelings. See reason!" he went on, striking his breast. "Do I lack reason? Am I not myself? You say we are poor; well, my daughter, I choose it to be so. I am your father, obey me. I will make you rich when I please. Your fortune? it is a pittance! When I find the solvent of carbon I will fill your parlor with diamonds, and they are but a scintilla of what I seek. You can well afford to wait while I consume my life in superhuman efforts."

"Father, I have no right to ask an account of the four millions you have already engulfed in this fatal garret. I will not speak to you of my mother whom you killed. If I had a husband, I should love him, doubtless, as she loved you; I should be ready to sacrifice all to him, as she sacrificed all for you. I have obeyed her orders in giving myself wholly to you; I

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have proved it in not marrying and compelling you to render an account of your guardianship. Let us dismiss the past and think of the present. I am here now to represent the necessity which you have created for yourself. You must have money to meet your notes — do you understand me? There is nothing left to seize here but the portrait of your ancestor, the Claës martyr. I come in the name of my mother, who felt herself too feeble to defend her children against their father; she ordered me to resist you. I come in the name of my brothers and my sister: I come, father, in the name of all the Claës, and I command you to give up your experiments, or earn the means of pursuing them hereafter, if pursue them you must. If you arm yourself with the power of your paternity, which you employ only for our destruction, I have on my side your ancestors and your honor, whose voice is louder than that of chemistry. The Family is greater than Science. I have been too long your daughter."

"And you choose to be my executioner," he said, in a feeble voice.

Marguerite turned and fled away, that she might not abdicate the part she had just assumed: she fancied she heard again her mother's voice saying to her, "Do not oppose your father too much; love him well."

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XII.

"MADEMOISELLE has made a pretty piece of work up yonder," said Lemulquinier, coming down to the kitchen for his breakfast. "We were just going to put our hands on the great secret, we only wanted a scrap of July sun, for monsieur, — ah, what a man! he's almost in the shoes of the good God himself! — was almost within *that*," he said to Josette, clicking his thumbnail against a front tooth, "of getting hold of the Absolute, when up she came, slam bang, screaming some nonsense about notes of hand."

"Well, pay them yourself," said Martha, "out of your wages."

"Where's the butter for my bread?" said Lemulquinier to the cook.

"Where's the money to buy it?" she answered, sharply. "Come, old villain, if you make gold in that devil's kitchen of yours, why don't you make butter? 'T would n't be half so difficult, and you could sell it in the market for enough to make the pot boil. We all eat dry bread. The young ladies are satisfied with dry bread and nuts, and do you expect to be better fed than your masters? Mademoiselle won't spend more

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than one hundred francs a month for the whole household. There 's only one dinner for all. If you want dainties you 've got your furnaces upstairs where you fricassee pearls till there 's nothing else talked of in town. Get your roast chickens up there."

Lemulquinier took his dry bread and went out.

"He will go and buy something to eat with his own money," said Martha; "all the better, — it is just so much saved. Is n't he stingy, the old scarecrow!"

"Starve him! that 's the only way to manage him," said Josette. "For a week past he has n't rubbed a single floor; I have to do his work, for he is always upstairs. He can very well afford to pay me for it with the present of a few herrings; if he brings any home, I shall lay hands on them, I can tell him that."

"Ah!" exclaimed Martha, "I hear Mademoiselle Marguerite crying. Her wizard of a father would swallow the house at a gulp without asking a Christian blessing, the old sorcerer! In my country he 'd be burned alive; but people here have no more religion than the Moors in Africa."

Marguerite could scarcely stifle her sobs as she came through the gallery. She reached her room, took out her mother's letter, and read as follows: —

My Child, — If God so wills, my spirit will be within your heart when you read these words, the last I shall ever write; they are full of love for my dear ones, left at the mercy of a

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demon whom I have not been able to resist. When you read these words he will have taken your last crust, just as he took my life and squandered my love. You know, my darling, if I loved your father: I die loving him less, for I take precautions against him which I never could have practised while living. Yes, in the depths of my coffin I shall have kept a last resource for the day when some terrible misfortune overtakes you. If when that day comes you are reduced to poverty, or if your honor is in question, my child, send for Monsieur de Solis, should he be living,— if not, for his nephew, our good Emmanuel; they hold one hundred and seventy thousand francs which are yours and will enable you to live.

If nothing shall have subdued his passion; if his children prove no stronger barrier than my happiness has been, and cannot stop his criminal career, — leave him, leave your father, that you may live. I could not forsake him; I was bound to him. You, Marguerite, you must save the family. I absolve you for all you may do to defend Gabriel and Jean and Félicie. Take courage; be the guardian angel of the Claës. Be firm, — I dare not say be pitiless; but to repair the evil already done you must keep some means at hand. On the day when you read this letter, regard yourself as ruined already, for nothing will stay the fury of that passion which has torn all things from me.

My child, remember this: the truest love is to forget your heart. Even though you be forced to deceive your father, your dissimulation will be blessed; your actions, however blamable they may seem, will be heroic if taken to protect the family. The virtuous Monsieur de Solis tells me so; and no conscience was ever purer or more enlightened than his. I could never have had the courage to speak these words to you, even with my dying breath.

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And yet, my daughter, be respectful, be kind in the dreadful struggle. Resist him, but love him; deny him gently. My hidden tears, my inward griefs will be known only when I am dead. Kiss my dear children in my name when the hour comes and you are called upon to protect them.

May God and the saints be with you!

JOSÉPHINE.

To this letter was added an acknowledgment from the Messieurs de Solis, uncle and nephew, who thereby bound themselves to place the money intrusted to them by Madame Claës in the hands of whoever of her children should present the paper.

"Martha," cried Marguerite to the duenna, who came quickly; "go to Monsieur Emmanuel de Solis, and ask him to come to me. — Noble, discreet heart! he never told me," she thought; "though all my griefs and cares are his, he never told me!"

Emmanuel came before Martha could get back.

"You have kept a secret from me," she said, showing him her mother's letter.

Emmanuel bent his head.

"Marguerite, are you in great trouble?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered; "be my support, — you, whom my mother calls 'our good Emmanuel.'" She showed him the letter, unable to repress her joy in knowing that her mother approved her choice.

"My blood and my life were yours on the morrow of the day when I first saw you in the gallery," he said;

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"but I scarcely dared to hope the time might come when you would accept them. If you know me well, you know my word is sacred. Forgive the absolute obedience I have paid to your mother's wishes; it was not for me to judge her intentions."

"You have saved us," she said, interrupting him, and taking his arm to go down to the parlor.

After hearing from Emmanuel the origin of the money intrusted to him, Marguerite confided to him the terrible straits in which the family now found themselves.

"I must pay those notes at once," said Emmanuel. "If Mersktus holds them all, you can at least save the interest. I will bring you the remaining seventy thousand francs. My poor uncle left me quite a large sum in ducats, which are easy to carry secretly."

"Oh!" she said, "bring them at night; we can hide them when my father is asleep. If he knew that I had money, he might try to force it from me. Oh, Emmanuel, think what it is to distrust a father!" she said, weeping and resting her forehead against the young man's heart.

This sad, confiding movement, with which the young girl asked protection, was the first expression of a love hitherto wrapped in melancholy and restrained within a sphere of grief: the heart, too full, was forced to overflow beneath the pressure of this new misery.

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"What can we do; what will become of us? He sees nothing, he cares for nothing, — neither for us nor for himself. I know not how he can live in that garret, where the air is stifling."

"What can you expect of a man who calls incessantly, like Richard III., 'My kingdom for a horse'?" said Emmanuel. "He is pitiless; and in that you must imitate him. Pay his notes; give him, if you will, your whole fortune; but that of your sister and of your brothers is neither yours nor his."

"Give him my fortune?" she said, pressing her lover's hand and looking at him with ardor in her eyes; "you advise it, you! — and Pierquin told a hundred lies to make me keep it!"

"Alas! I may be selfish in my own way," he said. "Sometimes I long for you without fortune; you seem nearer to me then! At other times I want you rich and happy, and I feel how paltry it is to think that the poor grandeurs of wealth can separate us."

"Dear, let us not speak of ourselves."

"Ourselves!" he repeated, with rapture. Then, after a pause, he added: "The evil is great, but it is not irreparable."

"It can be repaired only by us: the Claës family has now no head. To reach the stage of being neither father nor man, to have no consciousness of justice or injustice (for, in defiance of the laws, he has dissipated —

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he, so great, so noble, so upright — the property of the children he was bound to defend), oh, to what depths must he have fallen! My God! what is this thing he seeks?"

"Unfortunately, dear Marguerite, wrong as he is in his relation to his family, he is right scientifically. A score of men in Europe admire him for the very thing which others count as madness. But nevertheless you must, without scruple, refuse to let him take the property of his children. Great discoveries have always been accidental. If your father ever finds the solution of the problem, it will be when it costs him nothing; in a moment, perhaps, when he despairs of it."

"My poor mother is happy," said Marguerite; "she would have suffered a thousand deaths before she died: as it was, her first encounter with Science killed her. Alas! the strife is endless."

"There is an end," said Emmanuel. "When you have nothing left, Monsieur Claës can get no further credit; then he will stop."

"Let him stop now, then," cried Marguerite, "for we are without a penny!"

Monsieur de Solis went to buy up Claës's notes and returned, bringing them to Marguerite. Balthazar, contrary to his custom, came down a few moments before dinner. For the first time in two years his daughter noticed the signs of a human grief upon his face: he

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was again a father, reason and judgment had overcome Science; he looked into the court-yard, then into the garden, and when certain that he was alone with his daughter, he came up to her with a look of melancholy kindness.

"My child," he said, taking her hand and pressing it with persuasive tenderness, "forgive your old father. Yes, Marguerite, I have done wrong. You spoke truly. So long as I have not *found* I am a miserable wretch. I will go away from here. I cannot see Van Claës sold," he went on, pointing to the martyr's portrait. "He died for Liberty, I die for Science; he is venerated, I am hated."

"Hated? oh, my father, no," she cried, throwing herself on his breast; "we all adore you. Do we not, Félicie?" she said, turning to her sister who came in at the moment.

"What is the matter, dear father?" said his youngest daughter, taking his hand.

"I have ruined you."

"Ah!" cried Félicie, "but our brothers will make our fortune. Jean is always at the head of his class."

"See, father," said Marguerite, leading Balthazar in a coaxing, filial way to the chimney-piece and taking some papers from beneath the clock, "here are your notes of hand; but do not sign any more, there is nothing left to pay them with —"

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"Then you have money?" whispered Balthazar in her ear, when he recovered from his surprise.

His words and manner tortured the heroic girl; she saw the delirium of joy and hope in her father's face as he looked about him to discover the gold.

"Father," she said, "I have my own fortune."

"Give it to me," he said with a rapacious gesture; "I will return you a hundred-fold."

"Yes, I will give it to you," answered Marguerite, looking gravely at Balthazar, who did not know the meaning she put into her words.

"Ah, my dear daughter!" he cried, "you save my life. I have thought of a last experiment, after which nothing more is possible. If, this time, I do not find the Absolute, I must renounce the search. Come to my arms, my darling child; I will make you the happiest woman upon earth. You give me glory; you bring me back to happiness; you bestow the power to heap treasures upon my children — yes! I will load you with jewels, with wealth."

He kissed his daughter's forehead, took her hands and pressed them, and testified his joy by fondling caresses which to Marguerite seemed almost obsequious. During the dinner he thought only of her; he looked at her eagerly with the assiduous devotion displayed by a lover to his mistress: if she made a movement, he tried to divine her wish, and rose to fulfil it; he

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made her ashamed by the youthful eagerness of his attentions, which were painfully out of keeping with his premature old age. To all these cajoleries, Marguerite herself presented the contrast of actual distress, shown sometimes by a word of doubt, sometimes by a glance along the empty shelves of the sideboards in the dining-room.

"Well, well," he said, following her eye, "in six months we shall fill them again with gold, and marvellous things. You shall be like a queen. Bah! nature herself will belong to us, we shall rise above all created beings — through you, you, my Marguerite! Margarita," he said, smiling, "thy name is a prophecy. 'Margarita' means a pearl. Sterne says so somewhere. Did you ever read Sterne? Would you like to have a Sterne? it would amuse you."

"A pearl, they say, is the result of a disease," she answered; "we have suffered enough already."

"Do not be sad; you will make the happiness of those you love; you shall be rich and all-powerful."

"Mademoiselle has got such a good heart," said Lemulquinier, whose seamed face stretched itself painfully into a smile.

For the rest of the evening Balthazar displayed to his daughters all the natural graces of his character and the charms of his conversation. Seductive as the serpent, his lips, his eyes, poured out a magnetic fluid; he

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put forth that power of genius, that gentleness of spirit which once fascinated Joséphine and now drew, as it were, his daughters into his heart. When Emmanuel de Solis came he found, for the first time in many months, the father and the children reunited. The young professor, in spite of his reserve, came under the influence of the scene; for Claës's manners and conversation had recovered their former irresistible seduction!

Men of science, plunged though they be in abysses of thought and ceaselessly employed in studying the moral world, take notice, nevertheless, of the smallest details of the sphere in which they live. More out of date with their surroundings than really absent-minded, they are never in harmony with the life about them; they know and forget all; they prejudge the future in their own minds, prophesy to their own souls, know of an event before it happens, and yet they say nothing of all this. If, in the hush of meditation, they sometimes use their power to observe and recognize that which goes on around them, they are satisfied with having divined its meaning; their occupations hurry them on, and they frequently make false application of the knowledge they have acquired about the things of life. Sometimes they wake from their social apathy, or they drop from the world of thought to the world of life; at such times they come with well-stored memories, and are by no means strangers to what is happening.

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Balthazar, who joined the perspicacity of the heart to that of the brain, knew his daughter's whole past; he knew, or he had guessed, the history of the hidden love that united her with Emmanuel: he now showed this delicately, and sanctioned their affection by taking part in it. It was the sweetest flattery a father could bestow, and the lovers were unable to resist it. The evening passed delightfully, — contrasting with the griefs which threatened the lives of these poor children. When Balthazar retired, after, as we may say, filling his family with light and bathing them with tenderness, Emmanuel de Solis, who had shown some embarrassment of manner, took from his pockets three thousand ducats in gold, the possession of which he had feared to betray. He placed them on the work-table, where Marguerite covered them with some linen she was mending; and then he went to his own house to fetch the rest of the money. When he returned, Félicie had gone to bed. Eleven o'clock struck; Martha, who sat up to undress her mistress, was still with Félicie.

"Where can we hide it?" said Marguerite, unable to resist the pleasure of playing with the gold ducats, — a childish amusement which proved disastrous.

"I will lift this marble pedestal, which is hollow," said Emmanuel; "you can slip in the packages, and the devil himself will not think of looking for them there."

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Just as Marguerite was making her last trip but one from the work-table to the pedestal, carrying the gold, she suddenly gave a piercing cry, and let fall the packages, the covers of which broke as they fell, and the coins were scattered about the room. Her father stood at the parlor door; the avidity of his eyes terrified her.

"What are you doing?" he said, looking first at his daughter, whose terror nailed her to the floor, and then at the young man, who had hastily sprung up, — though his attitude beside the pedestal was sufficiently significant. The rattle of the gold upon the ground was horrible, the scattering of it prophetic.

"I could not be mistaken," said Balthazar, sitting down; "I heard the sound of gold."

He was not less agitated than the young people, whose hearts were beating so in unison that their throbs might be heard, like the ticking of a clock, amid the profound silence which suddenly settled on the parlor.

"Thank you, Monsieur de Solis," said Marguerite, giving Emmanuel a glance which meant, "Come to my rescue and help me to save this money."

"What gold is this?" resumed Balthazar, casting at Marguerite and Emmanuel a glance of terrible clear-sightedness.

"This gold belongs to Monsieur de Solis, who is kind enough to lend it to me that I may pay our debts honorably," she answered.

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Emmanuel colored and turned as though about to leave the room: Balthazar caught him by the arm.

"Monsieur," he said, "you must not escape my thanks."

"Monsieur, you owe me none. This money belongs to Mademoiselle Marguerite, who borrows it from me on the security of her own property," Emmanuel replied, looking at his mistress, who thanked him with an almost imperceptible movement of her eyelids.

"I shall not allow that," said Claës, taking a pen and a sheet of paper from the table where Félicie did her writing, and turning to the astonished young people. "How much is it?" His eager passion made him more astute than the wiliest of rascally bailiffs: the sum was to be his. Marguerite and Monsieur de Solis hesitated.

"Let us count it," he said.

"There are six thousand ducats," said Emmanuel.

"Seventy thousand francs," remarked Claës.

The glance which Marguerite threw at her lover gave him courage.

"Monsieur," he said, "your note bears no value; pardon this purely technical term. I have to-day lent Mademoiselle Claës one hundred thousand francs to redeem your notes of hand which you had no means of paying: you are therefore unable to give me any security. These one hundred and seventy thousand francs

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belong to Mademoiselle Claës, who can dispose of them as she sees fit; but I have lent them on a pledge that she will sign a deed securing them to me on her share of the now denuded land of the forest of Waignies."

Marguerite turned away her head that her lover might not see the tears that gathered in her eyes. She knew Emmanuel's purity of soul. Brought up by his uncle to the practice of the sternest religious virtues, the young man had an especial horror of falsehood: after giving his heart and life to Marguerite Claës he now made her the sacrifice of his conscience.

"Adieu, monsieur," said Balthazar, "I thought you had more confidence in a man who looked upon you with the eyes of a father."

After exchanging a despairing look with Marguerite, Emmanuel was shown out by Martha, who closed and fastened the street-door.

The moment the father and daughter were alone Claës said, —

"You love me, do you not?"

"Come to the point, father. You want this money: you cannot have it."

She began to pick up the coins; her father silently helped her to gather them together and count the sum she had dropped; Marguerite allowed him to do so without manifesting the least distrust. When two thousand

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ducats were piled on the table, Balthazar said, with a desperate air, —

"Marguerite, I must have that money."

"If you take it, it will be robbery," she replied coldly. "Hear me, father: better kill us at one blow than make us suffer a hundred deaths a day. Let it now be seen which of us must yield."

"Do you mean to kill your father?"

"We avenge our mother," she said, pointing to the spot where Madame Claës died.

"My daughter, if you knew the truth of this matter, you would not use those words to me. Listen, and I will endeavor to explain the great problem — but no, you cannot comprehend me," he cried in accents of despair. "Come, give me the money; believe for once in your father. Yes, I know I caused your mother pain: I have dissipated — to use the word of fools — my own fortune and injured yours; I know my children are sacrificed for a thing you call madness; but my angel, my darling, my love, my Marguerite, hear me! If I do not now succeed, I will give myself up to you; I will obey you as you are bound to obey me; I will do your will; you shall take charge of all my property; I will no longer be the guardian of my children; I pledge myself to lay down my authority. I swear by your mother's memory!" he cried, shedding tears.

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Marguerite turned away her head, unable to bear the sight. Claës, thinking she meant to yield, flung himself on his knees beside her.

"Marguerite, Marguerite! give it to me — give it!" he cried. "What are sixty thousand francs against eternal remorse? See, I shall die, this will kill me. Listen, my word is sacred. If I fail now I will abandon my labors; I will leave Flanders, — France even, if you demand it; I will go away and toil like a day-laborer to recover, sou by sou, the fortunes I have lost, and restore to my children all that Science has taken from them."

Marguerite tried to raise her father, but he persisted in remaining on his knees, and continued, still weeping: —

"Be tender and obedient for this last time! If I do not succeed, I will myself declare your hardness just. You shall call me a fool; you shall say I am a bad father; you may even tell me that I am ignorant and incapable. And when I hear you say those words I will kiss your hands. You may beat me, if you will, and when you strike I will bless you as the best of daughters, remembering that you have given me your blood."

"If it were my blood, my life's blood, I would give it to you," she cried; "but can I let Science cut the throats of my brothers and my sister? No. Cease,

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cease!" she said, wiping her tears and pushing aside her father's caressing hands.

"Sixty thousand francs and two months," he said, rising in anger; "that is all I want: but my daughter stands between me and fame and wealth. I curse you!" he went on; "you are no daughter of mine, you are not a woman, you have no heart, you will never be a mother or a wife!— Give it to me, let me take it, my little one, my precious child, I will love you forever," — and he stretched his hand with a movement of hideous energy towards the gold.

"I am helpless against physical force; but God and the great Claës see us now," she said, pointing to the picture.

"Try to live, if you can, with your father's blood upon you," cried Balthazar, looking at her with abhorrence. He rose, glanced round the room and slowly left it. When he reached the door he turned as a beggar might have done and implored his daughter with a gesture, to which she replied by a negative motion of her head.

"Farewell, my daughter," he said, gently, "may you live happy!"

When he had disappeared, Marguerite remained in a trance which separated her from earth; she was no longer in the parlor; she lost consciousness of physical existence; she had wings, and soared amid the

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immensities of the moral world, where Thought contracts the limits both of Time and Space, where a divine hand lifts the veil of the Future. It seemed to her that days elapsed between each footfall of her father as he went up the stairs; then a shudder of dread went over her as she heard him enter his chamber. Guided by a presentiment which flashed into her soul with the piercing keenness of lightning, she ran up the stairway, without light, without noise, with the velocity of an arrow, and saw her father with a pistol at his head.

"Take all!" she cried, springing towards him.

She fell into a chair. Balthazar, seeing her pallor, began to weep as old men weep; he became like a child, he kissed her brow, he spoke in disconnected words, he almost danced with joy, and tried to play with her as a lover with a mistress who has made him happy.

"Enough, father, enough," she said; "remember your promise. If you do not succeed now, you pledge yourself to obey me?"

"Yes."

"Oh, mother!" she cried turning towards Madame Claës's chamber, "*you* would have given him all — would you not?"

"Sleep in peace," said Balthazar, "you are a good daughter."

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"And saw her father with a pistol at his head."

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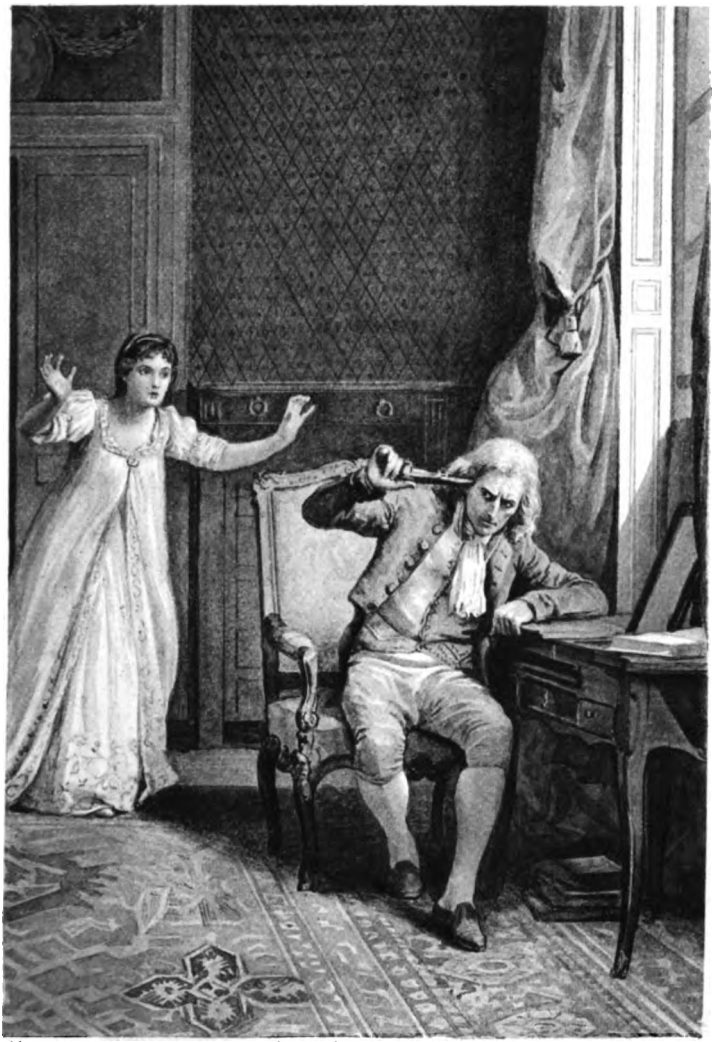

Jules Girardet — Copyright 1896 by Roberts Bros — Procédé Gaupil

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"Sleep!" she said, "the nights of my youth are gone; you have made me old, father, just as you slowly withered my mother's heart."

"Poor child, would I could re-assure you by explaining the effects of the glorious experiment I have now imagined! you would then comprehend the truth."

"I comprehend our ruin," she said, leaving him.

The next morning, being a holiday, Emmanuel de Solis brought Jean to spend the day.

"Well?" he said, approaching Marguerite anxiously.

"I yielded," she replied.

"My dear life," he said, with a gesture of melancholy joy, "if you had withstood him I should greatly have admired you; but weak and feeble, I adore you!"

"Poor, poor Emmanuel; what is left for us?"

"Leave the future to me," cried the young man, with a radiant look; "we love each other, and all is well."

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XIII.

SEVERAL months went by in perfect tranquillity. Monsieur de Solis made Marguerite see that her petty economies would never produce a fortune, and he advised her to live more at ease, by taking all that remained of the sum which Madame Claës had intrusted to him for the comfort and well-being of the household.

During these months Marguerite fell a prey to the anxieties which beset her mother under like circumstances. However incredulous she might be, she had come to hope in her father's genius. By an inexplicable phenomenon, many people have hope where they have no faith. Hope is the flower of Desire, faith is the fruit of Certainty. Marguerite said to herself, "If my father succeeds, we shall be happy." Claës and Lemulquinier alone said: "We shall succeed." Unhappily, from day to day the Searcher's face grew sadder. Sometimes, when he came to dinner he dared not look at his daughter; at other times he glanced at her in triumph. Marguerite employed her evenings in making young de Solis explain to her many legal points and difficulties. At last her masculine education was completed; she

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was evidently preparing herself to execute the plan she had resolved upon if her father were again vanquished in his duel with the Unknown (X).

About the beginning of July, Balthazar spent a whole day sitting on a bench in the garden, plunged in gloomy meditation. He gazed at the mound now bare of tulips, at the windows of his wife's chamber; he shuddered, no doubt, as he thought of all that his search had cost him: his movements betrayed that his thoughts were busy outside of Science. Marguerite brought her sewing and sat beside him for a while before dinner.

"You have not succeeded, father?"

"No, my child."

"Ah!" said Marguerite, in a gentle voice. "I will not say one word of reproach; we are both equally guilty. I only claim the fulfilment of your promise; it is surely sacred to you — you are a Claës. Your children will surround you with love and filial respect; but you now belong to me; you owe me obedience. Do not be uneasy; my reign will be gentle, and I will endeavor to bring it quickly to an end. Father, I am going to leave you for a month; I shall be busy with your affairs; for," she said, kissing him on his brow, "you are now my child. I take Martha with me; to-morrow Félicie will manage the household. The poor child is only seventeen, and she will not know how to resist you; therefore be generous, do not ask her for

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money; she has only enough for the barest necessaries of the household. Take courage: renounce your labors and your thoughts for three or four years. The great problem may ripen towards discovery; by that time I shall have gathered the money that is necessary to solve it, — and you will solve it. Tell me, father, your queen is clement, is she not?"

"Then all is not lost?" said the old man.

"No, not if you keep your word."

"I will obey you, my daughter," answered Claës, with deep emotion.

The next day, Monsieur Conyncks of Cambrai came to fetch his great-niece. He was in a travelling-carriage, and would only remain long enough for Marguerite and Martha to make their last arrangements. Monsieur Claës received his cousin with courtesy, but he was evidently sad and humiliated. Old Conyncks guessed his thoughts, and said with blunt frankness while they were breakfasting: —

"I have some of your pictures, cousin; I have a taste for pictures, — a ruinous passion, but we all have our manias."

"Dear uncle!" exclaimed Marguerite.

"The world declares that you are ruined, cousin; but the treasure of a Claës is there," said Conyncks, tapping his forehead, "and here," striking his heart; "don't you think so? I count upon you; and for that reason,

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having a few spare ducats in my wallet, I put them to use in your service."

"Ah!" cried Balthazar, "I will repay you with treasures —"

"The only treasures we possess in Flanders are patience and labor," replied Conyncks, sternly. "Our ancestor has those words engraved upon his brow," he said, pointing to the portrait of Van Claës.

Marguerite kissed her father and bade him good-by, gave her last directions to Josette and to Félicie, and started with Monsieur Conyncks for Paris. The great-uncle was a widower with one child, a daughter twelve years old, and he was possessed of an immense fortune. It was not impossible that he would take a wife; consequently, the good people of Douai believed that Mademoiselle Claës would marry her great-uncle. The rumor of this marriage reached Pierquin, and brought him back in hot haste to the House of Claës.

Great changes had taken place in the ideas of that clever speculator. For the last two years society in Douai had been divided into hostile camps. The nobility formed one circle, the bourgeoisie another; the latter naturally inimical to the former. This sudden separation took place, as a matter of fact, all over France, and divided the country into two warring nations, whose jealous squabbles, always augmenting, were among the chief reasons why the revolution of July,

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1830, was accepted in the provinces. Between these social camps, the one ultra-monarchical, the other ultra-liberal, were a number of functionaries of various kinds, admitted, according to their importance, to one or the other of these circles, and who, at the moment of the fall of the legitimate power, were neutral. At the beginning of the struggle between the nobility and the bourgeoisie, the royalist "cafés" displayed an unheard-of splendor, and eclipsed the liberal "cafés" so brilliantly that these gastronomic fêtes were said to have cost the lives of some of their frequenters who, like ill-cast cannon, were unable to withstand such practice. The two societies naturally became exclusive.

Pierquin, though rich for a provincial lawyer, was excluded from aristocratic circles and driven back upon the bourgeoisie. His self-love must have suffered from the successive rebuffs which he received when he felt himself insensibly set aside by people with whom he had rubbed shoulders up to the time of this social change. He had now reached his fortieth year, the last epoch at which a man who intends to marry can think of a young wife. The matches to which he was able to aspire were all among the bourgeoisie, but ambition prompted him to enter the upper circle by means of some creditable alliance.

The isolation in which the Claës family were now living had hitherto kept them aloof from these social

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changes. Though Claës belonged to the old aristocracy of the province, his preoccupation of mind prevented him from sharing the class antipathies thus created. However poor a daughter of the Claës might be, she would bring to a husband the dower of social vanity so eagerly desired by all parvenus. Pierquin therefore returned to his allegiance, with the secret intention of making the necessary sacrifices to conclude a marriage which should realize all his ambitions. He kept company with Balthazar and Félicie during Marguerite's absence; but in so doing he discovered, rather late in the day, a formidable competitor in Emmanuel de Solis. The property of the deceased abbé was thought to be considerable, and to the eyes of a man who calculated all the affairs of life in figures, the young heir seemed more powerful through his money than through the seductions of the heart—as to which Pierquin never made himself uneasy. In his mind the abbé's fortune restored the de Solis name to all its pristine value. Gold and nobility of birth were two orbs which reflected lustre on one another and doubled the illumination.

The sincere affection which the young professor testified for Félicie, whom he treated as a sister, excited Pierquin's spirit of emulation. He tried to eclipse Emmanuel by mingling a fashionable jargon and sundry expressions of superficial gallantry with anxious elegies and business airs which sat more naturally on his coun-

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tenance. When he declared himself disenchanted with the world he looked at Félicie, as if to let her know that she alone could reconcile him with life. Félicie, who received for the first time in her life the compliments of a man, listened to this language, always sweet however deceptive; she took emptiness for depth, and needing an object on which to fix the vague emotions of her heart, she allowed the lawyer to occupy her mind. Envious perhaps, though quite unconsciously, of the loving attentions with which Emmanuel surrounded her sister, she doubtless wished to be, like Marguerite, the object of the thoughts and cares of a man.

Pierquin readily perceived the preference which Félicie accorded him over Emmanuel, and to him it was a reason why he should persist in his attentions; so that in the end he went further than he at first intended. Emmanuel watched the beginning of this passion, false perhaps in the lawyer, artless in Félicie, whose future was at stake. Soon, little colloquies followed, a few words said in a low voice behind Emmanuel's back, trifling deceptions which give to a look or a word a meaning whose insidious sweetness may be the cause of innocent mistakes. Relying on his intimacy with Félicie, Pierquin tried to discover the secret of Marguerite's journey, and to know if it were really a question of her marriage, and whether he must renounce all hope; but, notwithstanding his clumsy cleverness in questioning

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them, neither Balthazar nor Félicie could give him any light, for the good reason that they were in the dark themselves: Marguerite in taking the reins of power seemed to have followed its maxims and kept silence as to her projects.

The gloomy sadness of Balthazar and his great depression made it difficult to get through the evenings. Though Emmanuel succeeded in making him play backgammon, the chemist's mind was never present; during most of the time this man, so great in intellect, seemed simply stupid. Shorn of his expectations, ashamed of having squandered three fortunes, a gambler without money, he bent beneath the weight of ruin, beneath the burden of hopes that were betrayed rather than annihilated. This man of genius, gagged by dire necessity and upbraiding himself, was a tragic spectacle, fit to touch the hearts of the most unfeeling of men. Even Pierquin could not enter without respect the presence of that caged lion, whose eyes, full of baffled power, now calmed by sadness and faded from excess of light, seemed to proffer a prayer for charity which the mouth dared not utter. Sometimes a lightning flash crossed that withered face, whose fires revived at the conception of a new experiment; then, as he looked about the parlor, Balthazar's eyes would fasten on the spot where his wife had died, a film of tears rolled like hot grains of sand across the arid pupils of his eyes, which thought had

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made immense, and his head fell forward on his breast. Like a Titan he had lifted the world, and the world fell on his breast and crushed him.

This gigantic grief, so manfully controlled, affected Pierquin and Emmanuel powerfully, and each felt moved at times to offer this man the necessary money to renew his search, — so contagious are the convictions of genius! Both understood how it was that Madame Claës and Marguerite had flung their all into the gulf; but reason promptly checked this impulse of their hearts, and their emotion was spent in efforts at consolation which still further embittered the anguish of the doomed Titan.

Claës never spoke of his eldest daughter, and showed no interest in her departure nor any anxiety as to her silence in not writing either to him or to Félicie. When de Solis or Pierquin asked for news of her he seemed annoyed. Did he suspect that Marguerite was working against him? Was he humiliated at having resigned the majestic rights of paternity to his own child? Had he come to love her less because she was now the father, he the child? Perhaps there were many of these reasons, many of these inexpressible feelings which float like vapors through the soul, in the mute disgrace which he laid upon Marguerite. However great may be the great men of the earth, be they known or unknown, fortunate or unfortunate in their endeavors, all have littlenesses which belong to human nature. By a

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double misfortune they suffer through their greatness not less than through their defects; and perhaps Balthazar needed to grow accustomed to the pangs of wounded vanity. The life he was leading, the evenings when these four persons met together in Marguerite's absence, were full of sadness and vague, uneasy apprehensions. The days were barren like a parched-up soil; where, nevertheless a few flowers grew, a few rare consolations, though without Marguerite, the soul, the hope, the strength of the family, the atmosphere seemed misty.

Two months went by in this way, during which Balthazar awaited the return of his daughter. Marguerite was brought back to Douai by her uncle who remained at the house instead of returning to Cambrai, no doubt to lend the weight of his authority to some *coup d' état* planned by his niece. Marguerite's return was made a family fête. Pierquin and Monsieur de Solis were invited to dinner by Félicie and Balthazar. When the travelling-carriage stopped before the house, the four went to meet it with demonstrations of joy. Marguerite seemed happy to see her home once more, and her eyes filled with tears as she crossed the court-yard to reach the parlor. When embracing her father she colored like a guilty wife who is unable to dissimulate; but her face recovered its serenity as she looked at Emmanuel, from whom she seemed to gather strength to complete a work she had secretly undertaken.

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Notwithstanding the gayety which animated all present during the dinner, father and daughter watched each other with distrust and curiosity. Balthazar asked his daughter no questions as to her stay in Paris, doubtless to preserve his parental dignity. Emmanuel de Solis imitated his reserve; but Pierquin, accustomed to be told all family secrets, said to Marguerite, concealing his curiosity under a show of liveliness: —

"Well, my dear cousin, you have seen Paris and the theatres —"

"I have seen little of Paris," she said; "I did not go there for amusement. The days went by sadly, I was so impatient to see Douai once more."

"Yes, if I had not been angry about it she would not have gone to the Opera; and even there she was uneasy," said Monsieur Conyncks.

It was a painful evening; every one was embarrassed and smiled vaguely with the artificial gayety which hides such real anxieties. Marguerite and Balthazar were a prey to cruel, latent fears which reacted on the rest. As the hours passed, the bearing of the father and daughter grew more and more constrained. Sometimes Marguerite tried to smile, but her motions, her looks, the tones of her voice betrayed a keen anxiety. Messieurs Conyncks and de Solis seemed to know the meaning of the secret feelings which agitated the noble girl, and they appeared to encourage her by expressive glances.

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Balthazar, hurt at being kept from a knowledge of the steps that had been taken on his behalf, withdrew little by little from his children and friends, and pointedly kept silence. Marguerite would no doubt soon disclose what she had decided upon for his future.

To a great man, to a father, the situation was intolerable. At his age a man no longer dissimulates in his own family; he became more and more thoughtful, serious, and grieved as the hour approached when he would be forced to meet his civil death. This evening covered one of those crises in the inner life of man which can only be expressed by imagery. The thunder-clouds were gathering in the sky, people were laughing in the fields; all felt the heat and knew the storm was coming, but they held up their heads and continued on their way. Monsieur Conyncks was the first to leave the room, conducted by Balthazar to his chamber. During the latter's absence Pierquin and Monsieur de Solis went away. Marguerite bade the notary good-night with much affection; she said nothing to Emmanuel, but she pressed his hand and gave him a tearful glance. She sent Félicie away, and when Claës returned to the parlor he found his daughter alone.

"My kind father," she said in a trembling voice, "nothing could have made me leave home but the serious position in which we found ourselves; but now, after much anxiety, after surmounting the greatest

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difficulties, I return with some chances of deliverance for all of us. Thanks to your name, and to my uncle's influence, and to the support of Monsieur de Solis, we have obtained for you an appointment under government as receiver of customs in Bretagne; the place is worth, they say, eighteen to twenty thousand francs a year. Our uncle has given bonds as your security. Here is the nomination," she added, drawing a paper from her bag. "Your life in Douai, in this house, during the coming years of privation and sacrifice would be intolerable to you. Our father must be placed in a situation at least equal to that in which he has always lived. I ask nothing from the salary you will receive from this appointment; employ it as you see fit. I will only beg you to remember that we have not a penny of income, and that we must live on what Gabriel can give us out of his. The town shall know nothing of our inner life. If you were still to live in this house you would be an obstacle to the means my sister and I are about to employ to restore comfort and ease to the home. Have I abused the authority you gave me by putting you in a position to remake your own fortune? In a few years, if you so will, you can easily become the receiver-general."

"In other words, Marguerite," said Balthazar, gently, "you turn me out of my own house."

"I do not deserve that bitter reproach," replied the

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daughter, quelling the tumultuous beatings of her heart. "You will come back to us when you are able to live in your native town in a manner becoming to your dignity. Besides, father, I have your promise. You are bound to obey me. My uncle has stayed here that he might himself accompany you to Bretagne, and not leave you to make the journey alone."

"I shall not go," said Balthazar, rising; "I need no help from any one to restore my property and pay what I owe to my children."

"It would be better, certainly," replied Marguerite, calmly. "But now I ask you to reflect on our respective situations, which I will explain in a few words. If you stay in this house your children will leave it, so that you may remain its master."

"Marguerite!" cried Balthazar.

"In that case," she said, continuing her words without taking notice of her father's anger, "it will be necessary to notify the minister of your refusal, if you decide not to accept this honorable and lucrative post, which, in spite of our many efforts, we should never have obtained but for certain thousand-franc notes my uncle slipped into the glove of a lady."

"My children leave me!" he exclaimed.

"You must leave us or we must leave you," she said. "If I were your only child, I should do as my mother did, without murmuring against my fate; but

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my brothers and my sister shall not perish beside you with hunger and despair. I promised it to her who died there," she said, pointing to the place where her mother's bed had stood. "We have hidden our troubles from you; we have suffered in silence; our strength is gone. My father, we are not on the edge of an abyss, we are at the bottom of it. Courage is not sufficient to drag us out of it; our efforts must not be incessantly brought to nought by the caprices of a passion."

"My dear children," cried Balthazar, seizing Marguerite's hand, "I will help you, I will work, I —"

"Here is the means," she answered, showing him the official letter.

"But, my darling, the means you offer me are too slow; you make me lose the fruits of ten years' work, and the enormous sums of money which my laboratory represents. There," he said, pointing towards the garret, "are our real resources."

Marguerite walked towards the door, saying, —

"Father, you must choose."

"Ah! my daughter, you are very hard," he replied, sitting down in an armchair and allowing her to leave him.

The next morning, on coming downstairs, Marguerite learned from Lemulquinier that Monsieur Claës had gone out. This simple announcement turned her pale;

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her face was so painfully significant that the old valet remarked hastily: —

"Don't be troubled, mademoiselle; monsieur said he would be back at eleven o'clock to breakfast. He did n't go to bed all night. At two in the morning he was still standing in the parlor, looking through the window at the laboratory. I was waiting up in the kitchen; I saw him; he wept; he is in trouble. Here 's the famous month of July when the sun is able to enrich us all, and if you only would — "

"Enough," said Marguerite, divining the thoughts that must have assailed her father's mind.

A phenomenon which often takes possession of persons leading sedentary lives had seized upon Balthazar; his life depended, so to speak, on the places with which it was identified; his thought was so wedded to his laboratory and to the house he lived in that both were indispensable to him, — just as the Bourse becomes a necessity to a stock-gambler, to whom the public holidays are so much lost time. Here were his hopes; here the heavens contained the only atmosphere in which his lungs could breathe the breath of life. This alliance of places and things with men, which is so powerful in feeble natures, becomes almost tyrannical in men of science and students. To leave his house was, for Balthazar, to renounce Science, to abandon the Problem, — it was death.

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Marguerite was a prey to anxiety until the breakfast hour. The former scene in which Balthazar had meant to kill himself came back to her memory, and she feared some tragic end to the desperate situation in which her father was placed. She came and went restlessly about the parlor, and quivered every time the bell or the street-door sounded.

At last Balthazar returned. As he crossed the court-yard Marguerite studied his face anxiously and could see nothing but an expression of stormy grief. When he entered the parlor she went towards him to bid him good-morning; he caught her affectionately round the waist, pressed her to his heart, kissed her brow, and whispered, —

"I have been to get my passport."

The tones of his voice, his resigned look, his feeble movements, crushed the poor girl's heart; she turned away her head to conceal her tears, and then, unable to repress them, she went into the garden to weep at her ease. During breakfast, Balthazar showed the cheerfulness of a man who had come to a decision.

"So we are to start for Bretagne, uncle," he said to Monsieur Conyncks. "I have always wished to go there."

"It is a place where one can live cheaply," replied the old man.

"Is our father going away?" cried Félicie.

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Monsieur de Solis entered, bringing Jean.

"You must leave him with me to-day," said Balthazar, putting his son beside him. "I am going away to-morrow, and I want to bid him good-by."

Emmanuel glanced at Marguerite, who held down her head. It was a gloomy day for the family; every one was sad, and tried to repress both thoughts and tears. This was not an absence, it was an exile. All instinctively felt the humiliation of the father in thus publicly declaring his ruin by accepting an office and leaving his family, at Balthazar's age. At this crisis he was great, while Marguerite was firm; he seemed to accept nobly the punishment of faults which the tyrannous power of genius had forced him to commit. When the evening was over, and father and daughter were again alone, Balthazar, who throughout the day had shown himself tender and affectionate as in the first years of his fatherhood, held out his hand and said to Marguerite with a tenderness that was mingled with despair, —

"Are you satisfied with your father?"

"You are worthy of *him*," said Marguerite, pointing to the portrait of Van Claës.

The next morning Balthazar, followed by Lemulquinier, went up to the laboratory, as if to bid farewell to the hopes he had so fondly cherished, and which in that scene of his toil were living things to him.

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Master and man looked at each other sadly as they entered the garret they were about to leave, perhaps forever. Balthazar gazed at the various instruments over which his thoughts so long had brooded; each was connected with some experiment or some research. He sadly ordered Lemulquinier to evaporate the gases and the dangerous acids, and to separate all substances which might produce explosions. While taking these precautions, he gave way to bitter regrets, like those uttered by a condemned man before going to the scaffold.

"Here," he said, stopping before a china capsule in which two wires of a voltaic pile were dipped, "is an experiment whose results ought to be watched. If it succeeds — dreadful thought! — my children will have driven from their home a father who could fling diamonds at their feet. In a combination of carbon and sulphur," he went on, speaking to himself, "carbon plays the part of an electro-positive substance; the crystallization ought to begin at the negative pole; and in case of decomposition, the carbon would crop into crystals —"

"Ah! is that how it would be?" said Lemulquinier, contemplating his master with admiration.

"Now here," continued Balthazar, after a pause, "the combination is subject to the influence of the galvanic battery which may act —"

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"If monsieur wishes, I can increase its force."

"No, no; leave it as it is. Perfect stillness and time are the conditions of crystallization —"

"Confound it, it takes time enough, that crystallization," cried the old valet impatiently.

"If the temperature goes down, the sulphide of carbon will crystallize," said Balthazar, continuing to give forth shreds of indistinct thoughts which were parts of a complete conception in his own mind; "but if the battery works under certain conditions of which I am ignorant — it must be watched carefully — it is quite possible that — Ah! what am I thinking of? It is no longer a question of chemistry, my friend; we are to keep accounts in Bretagne."

Claës rushed precipitately from the laboratory, and went downstairs to take a last breakfast with his family, at which Pierquin and Monsieur de Solis were present. Balthazar, hastening to end the agony Science had imposed upon him, bade his children farewell and got into the carriage with his uncle, all the family accompanying him to the threshold. There, as Marguerite strained her father to her breast with a despairing pressure, he whispered in her ear, "You are a good girl; I bear you no ill-will;" then she darted through the court-yard into the parlor, and flung herself on her knees upon the spot where her mother had died, and prayed to God to give her strength to accomplish the

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hard task that lay before her. She was already strengthened by an inward voice, sounding in her heart the encouragement of angels and the gratitude of her mother, when her sister, her brother, Emmanuel, and Pierquin came in, after watching the carriage until it disappeared.

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XIV.

"And now, mademoiselle, what do you intend to do!" said Pierquin.

"Save the family," she answered simply. "We own nearly thirteen hundred acres at Waignies. I intend to clear them, divide them into three farms, put up the necessary buildings, and then let them. I believe that in a few years, with patience and great economy, each of us," motioning to her sister and brother, "will have a farm of over four hundred acres, which may bring in, some day, a rental of nearly fifteen thousand francs. My brother Gabriel will have this house, and all that now stands in his name on the Grand-Livre, for his portion. We shall then be able to redeem our father's property and return it to him free from all encumbrance, by devoting our incomes, each of us, to paying off his debts."

"But, my dear cousin," said the lawyer, amazed at Marguerite's understanding of business and her cool judgment, "you will need at least two hundred thousand francs to clear the land, build your houses, and purchase cattle. Where will you get such a sum?"

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"That is where my difficulties begin," she said, looking alternately at Pierquin and de Solis; "I cannot ask it from my uncle, who has already spent much money for us and has given bonds as my father's security."

"You have friends!" cried Pierquin, suddenly perceiving that the demoiselles Claës were "four-hundred-thousand-franc girls," after all.

Emmanuel de Solis looked tenderly at Marguerite. Pierquin, unfortunately for himself, was a notary still, even in the midst of his enthusiasm, and he promptly added, —

"I will lend you these two hundred thousand francs."

Marguerite and Emmanuel consulted each other with a glance which was a flash of light to Pierquin; Félicie colored highly, much gratified to find her cousin as generous as she desired him to be. She looked at her sister, who suddenly guessed the fact that during her absence the poor girl had allowed herself to be caught by Pierquin's meaningless gallantries.

"You shall only pay me five per cent interest," went on the lawyer, "and refund the money whenever it is convenient to do so; I will take a mortgage on your property. And don't be uneasy; you shall only have the outlay on your improvements to pay; I will find you trustworthy farmers, and do all your business gratuitously, so as to help you like a good relation."

Emmanuel made Marguerite a sign to refuse the

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offer, but she was too much occupied in studying the changes of her sister's face to perceive it. After a slight pause, she looked at the notary with an amused smile, and answered of her own accord, to the great joy of Monsieur de Solis: —

"You are indeed a good relation, — I expected nothing less of you; but an interest of five per cent would delay our release too long. I shall wait till my brother is of age, and then we will sell out what he has in the Funds."

Pierquin bit his lip. Emmanuel smiled quietly.

"Félicie, my dear child, take Jean back to school; Martha will go with you," said Marguerite to her sister. "Jean, my angel, be a good boy; don't tear your clothes, for we shall not be rich enough to buy you as many new ones as we did. Good-by, little one; study hard."

Félicie carried off her brother.

"Cousin," said Marguerite to Pierquin, "and you, monsieur," she said to Monsieur de Solis, "I know you have been to see my father during my absence, and I thank you for that proof of friendship. You will not do less I am sure for two poor girls who will be in need of counsel. Let us understand each other. When I am at home I shall receive you both with the greatest pleasure, but when Félicie is here alone with Josette and Martha, I need not tell you that she ought to see

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no one, not even an old friend or the most devoted of relatives. Under the circumstances in which we are placed, our conduct must be irreproachable. We are vowed to toil and solitude for a long, long time."

There was silence for some minutes. Emmanuel, absorbed in contemplation of Marguerite's head, seemed dumb. Pierquin did not know what to say. He took leave of his cousin with feelings of rage against himself; for he suddenly perceived that Marguerite loved Emmanuel, and that he, Pierquin, had just behaved like a fool.

"Pierquin, my friend," he said, apostrophizing himself in the street, "if a man said you were an idiot he would tell the truth. What a fool I am! I've got twelve thousand francs a year outside of my business, without counting what I am to inherit from my uncle des Racquets, which is likely to double my fortune (not that I wish him dead, he is so economical), and I've had the madness to ask interest from Mademoiselle Claës! I know those two are jeering at me now! I must n't think of Marguerite any more. No. After all, Félicie is a sweet, gentle little creature, who will suit me much better. Marguerite's character is iron; she would want to rule me — and — she would rule me. Come, come, let's be generous; I wish I was not so much of a lawyer: am I never to get that harness off my back? Bless my soul! I'll begin to fall in love

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with Félicie, and I won't budge from that sentiment. She will have a farm of four hundred and thirty acres, which, sooner or later, will be worth twelve or fifteen thousand francs a year, for the soil about Waignies is excellent. Just let my old uncle des Racquets die, poor dear man, and I 'll sell my practice and be a man of leisure, with fifty — thou — sand — francs — a — year. My wife is a Claës, I 'm allied to the great families. The deuce! we 'll see if those Courtevilles and Magalhens and Savaron de Savarus will refuse to come and dine with a Pierquin-Claës-Molina-Nourho. I shall be mayor of Douai; I 'll obtain the cross, and get to be deputy — in short, everything. Ha, ha! Pierquin, my boy, now keep yourself in hand; no more nonsense, because — yes, on my word of honor — Félicie — Mademoiselle Félicie Van Claës — loves you!"

When the lovers were left alone Emmanuel held out his hand to Marguerite, who did not refuse to put her right hand into it. They rose with one impulse and moved towards their bench in the garden; but as they reached the middle of the parlor, the lover could not resist his joy, and, in a voice that trembled with emotion, he said, —

"I have three hundred thousand francs of yours."

"What!" she cried, "did my poor mother intrust them to you? No? then where did you get them."

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"Oh, my Marguerite! all that is mine is yours. Was it not you who first said the word 'ourselves'?"

"Dear Emmanuel!" she exclaimed, pressing the hand which still held hers; and then, instead of going into the garden, she threw herself into a low chair.

"It is for me to thank you," he said, with the voice of love, "since you accept all."

"Oh, my dear beloved one," she cried, "this moment effaces many a grief and brings the happy future nearer. Yes, I accept your fortune," she continued, with the smile of an angel upon her lips, "I know the way to make it mine."

She looked up at the picture of Van Claës as if calling him to witness. The young man's eyes followed those of Marguerite, and he did not notice that she took a ring from her finger until he heard the words: —

"From the depths of our greatest misery one comfort rises. My father's indifference leaves me the free disposal of myself," she said, holding out the ring. "Take it, Emmanuel. My mother valued you — she would have chosen you."

The young man turned pale with emotion and fell on his knees beside her, offering in return a ring which he always wore.

"This is my mother's wedding-ring," he said, kissing it. "My Marguerite, am I to have no other pledge than this?"

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She stooped a little till her forehead met his lips.

"Alas, dear love," she said, greatly agitated, "are we not doing wrong? We have so long to wait!"

"My uncle used to say that adoration was the daily bread of patience, — he spoke of Christians who love God. That is how I love you; I have long mingled my love for you with my love for Him. I am yours as I am His."

They remained for a few moments in the power of this sweet enthusiasm. It was the calm, sincere effusion of a feeling which, like an overflowing spring, poured forth its superabundance in little wavelets. The events which separated these lovers produced a melancholy which only made their happiness the keener, giving it a sense of something sharp, like pain.

Félicie came back too soon. Emmanuel, inspired by that delightful tact of love which discerns all feelings, left the sisters alone, — exchanging a look with Marguerite to let her know how much this discretion cost him, how hungry his soul was for that happiness so long desired, which had just been consecrated by the betrothal of their hearts.

"Come here, little sister," said Marguerite, taking Félicie round the neck. Then, passing into the garden they sat down on the bench where generation after generation had confided to listening hearts their words of love, their sighs of grief, their meditations and their

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projects. In spite of her sister's joyous tone and lively manner, Félicie experienced a sensation that was very like fear. Marguerite took her hand and felt it tremble.

"Mademoiselle Félicie," said the elder, with her lips at her sister's ear. "I read your soul. Pierquin has been here often in my absence, and he has said sweet words to you, and you have listened to them." Félicie blushed. "Don't defend yourself, my angel," continued Marguerite, "it is so natural to love! Perhaps your dear nature will improve his; he is egotistical and self-interested, but for all that he is a good man, and his defects may even add to your happiness. He will love you as the best of his possessions; you will be a part of his business affairs. Forgive me this one word, dear love; you will soon correct the bad habit he has acquired of seeing money in everything, by teaching him the business of the heart."

Félicie could only kiss her sister.

"Besides," added Marguerite, "he has property; and his family belongs to the highest and the oldest bourgeoisie. But you don't think I would oppose your happiness even if the conditions were less prosperous, do you?"

Félicie let fall the words, "Dear sister."

"Yes, you may confide in me," cried Marguerite, "sisters can surely tell each other their secrets."

These words, so full of heartiness, opened the way

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to one of those delightful conversations in which young girls tell all. When Marguerite, expert in love, reached an understanding of the real state of Félicie's heart, she wound up their talk by saying: —

"Well, dear child, let us make sure he truly loves you, and — then — "

"Ah!" cried Félicie, laughing, "leave me to my own devices; I have a model before my eyes."

"Saucy child!" exclaimed Marguerite, kissing her.

Though Pierquin belonged to the class of men who regard marriage as the accomplishment of a social duty and the means of transmitting property, and though he was indifferent to which sister he should marry so long as both had the same name and the same dower, he did perceive that the two were, to use his own expression, "romantic and sentimental girls," adjectives employed by commonplace people to ridicule the gifts which Nature sows with grudging hand along the furrows of humanity. The lawyer no doubt said to himself that he had better swim with the stream; and accordingly the next day he came to see Marguerite, and took her mysteriously into the little garden, where he began to talk sentiment, — that being one of the clauses of the primal contract which, according to social usage, must precede the notarial contract.

"Dear cousin," he said, "you and I have not always been of one mind as to the best means of bringing your

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affairs to a happy conclusion; but you do now, I am sure, admit that I have always been guided by a great desire to be useful to you. Well, yesterday I spoiled my offer by a fatal habit which the legal profession forces upon us—you understand me? My heart did not share in the folly. I have loved you well; but I have a certain perspicacity, legal perhaps, which obliges me to see that I do not please you. It is my own fault; another has been more successful than I. Well, I come now to tell you, like an honest man, that I sincerely love your sister Félicie. Treat me therefore as a brother; accept my purse, take what you will from it, — the more you take the better you prove your regard for me. I am wholly at your service — *without interest,* you understand, neither at twelve nor at one quarter per cent. Let me be thought worthy of Félicie, that is all I ask. Forgive my defects; they come from business habits; my heart is good, and I would fling myself into the Scarpe sooner than not make my wife happy."

"This is all satisfactory, cousin," answered Marguerite; "but my sister's choice depends upon herself and also on my father's will."

"I know that, my dear cousin," said the lawyer, "but you are the mother of the whole family; and I have nothing more at heart than that you should judge me rightly."

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This conversation paints the mind of the honest notary. Later in life, Pierquin became celebrated by his reply to the commanding officer at Saint-Omer, who had invited him to be present at a military fête; the note ran as follows: "Monsieur Pierquin-Claës de Molina-Nourho, mayor of the city of Douai, chevalier of the Legion of honor, will have *that* of being present, etc."

Marguerite accepted the lawyer's offer only so far as it related to his professional services, so that she might not in any degree compromise either her own dignity as a woman, or her sister's future, or her father's authority.

The next day she confided Félicie to the care of Martha and Josette (who vowed themselves body and soul to their young mistress, and seconded all her economies), and started herself for Waignies, where she began operations, which were judiciously overlooked and directed by Pierquin. Devotion was now set down as a good speculation in the mind of that worthy man; his care and trouble were in fact an investment, and he had no wish to be niggardly in making it. First he contrived to save Marguerite the trouble of clearing the land and working the ground intended for the farms. He found three young men, sons of rich farmers, who were anxious to settle themselves in life, and he succeeded, through the prospect he held out to them of the fertility of the land, in making them take leases of

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the three farms on which the buildings were to be constructed. To gain possession of the farms rent-free for three years the tenants bound themselves to pay ten thousand francs a year the fourth year, twelve thousand the sixth year, and fifteen thousand for the remainder of the term; to drain the land, make the plantations, and purchase the cattle. While the buildings were being put up the farmers were to clear the land.

Four years after Balthazar Claës's departure from his home Marguerite had almost recovered the property of her brothers and sister. Two hundred thousand francs, lent to her by Emmanuel, had sufficed to put up the farm buildings. Neither help nor counsel was withheld from the brave girl, whose conduct excited the admiration of the whole town. Marguerite superintended the buildings, and looked after her contracts and leases with the good sense, activity, and perseverance, which women know so well how to call up when they are actuated by a strong sentiment. By the fifth year she was able to apply thirty thousand francs from the rental of the farms, together with the income from the Funds standing in her brother's name, and the proceeds of her father's property, towards paying off the mortgages on that property and repairing the devastation which her father's passion had wrought in the old mansion of the Claës. This redemption went on more

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rapidly as the interest account decreased. Emmanuel de Solis persuaded Marguerite to take the remaining one hundred thousand francs of his uncle's bequest, and by joining to it twenty thousand francs of his own savings, pay off in the third year of her management a large slice of the debts. This life of courage, privation, and endurance was never relaxed for five years; but all went well, — everything prospered under the administration and influence of Marguerite Claës.

Gabriel, now holding an appointment under government as engineer in the department of Roads and Bridges, made a rapid fortune, aided by his great-uncle, in a canal which he was able to construct; moreover, he succeeded in pleasing his cousin Mademoiselle Conyncks, the idol of her father, and one of the richest heiresses in Flanders. In 1824 the whole Claës property was free, and the house in the rue de Paris had repaired its losses. Pierquin made a formal application to Balthazar for the hand of Félicie, and Monsieur de Solis did the same for that of Marguerite.

At the beginning of January, 1825, Marguerite and Monsieur Conyncks left Douai to bring home the exiled father, whose return was eagerly desired by all, and who had sent in his resignation that he might return to his family and crown their happiness by his presence. Marguerite had often expressed a regret at not being able to replace the pictures which had formerly adorned

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the gallery and the reception-rooms, before the day when her father would return as master of his house. In her absence Pierquin and Monsieur de Solis plotted with Félicie to prepare a surprise which should make the younger sister a sharer in the restoration of the House of Claës. The two bought a number of fine pictures, which they presented to Félicie to decorate the gallery. Monsieur Conyncks had thought of the same thing. Wishing to testify to Marguerite the satisfaction he had taken in her noble conduct and in the self-devotion with which she had fulfilled her mother's dying mandate, he arranged that fifty of his fine pictures, among them several of those which Balthazar had formerly sold, should be brought to Douai in Marguerite's absence, so that the Claës gallery might once more be complete.

During the years that had elapsed since Balthazar Claës left his home, Marguerite had visited her father several times, accompanied by her sister or by Jean. Each time she had found him more and more changed; but since her last visit old age had come upon Balthazar with alarming symptoms, the gravity of which was much increased by the parsimony with which he lived that he might spend the greater part of his salary in experiments the results of which forever disappointed him. Though he was only sixty-five years of age, he appeared to be eighty. His eyes were sunken in their orbits, his

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eyebrows had whitened, only a few hairs remained as a fringe around his skull; he allowed his beard to grow, and cut it off with scissors when its length annoyed him; he was bent like a field-laborer, and the condition of his clothes had reached a degree of wretchedness which his decrepitude now rendered hideous. Thought still animated that noble face, whose features were scarcely discernible under its wrinkles; but the fixity of the eyes, a certain desperation of manner, a restless uneasiness, were all diagnostics of insanity, or rather of many forms of insanity. Sometimes a flash of hope gave him the look of a monomaniac; at other times impatient anger at not seizing a secret which flitted before his eyes like a will o' the wisp brought symptoms of madness into his face; or sudden bursts of maniacal laughter betrayed his irrationality: but during the greater part of the time, he was sunk in a state of complete depression which combined all the phases of insanity in the cold melancholy of an idiot. However fleeting and imperceptible these symptoms may have been to the eye of strangers, they were, unfortunately, only too plain to those who had known Balthazar Claës sublime in goodness, noble in heart, stately in person, — a Claës of whom, alas, scarcely a vestige now remained.

Lemulquinier, grown old and wasted like his master with incessant toil, had not, like him, been subjected to

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the ravages of thought. The expression of the old valet's face showed a singular mixture of anxiety and admiration for his master which might easily have misled an onlooker. Though he listened to Balthazar's words with respect, and followed his every movement with tender solicitude, he took charge of the servant of science very much as a mother takes care of her child, and even seemed to protect him, because in the vulgar details of life, to which Balthazar gave no thought, he actually did protect him. These old men, wrapped in one idea, confident of the reality of their hope, stirred by the same breath, the one representing the shell, the other the soul of their mutual existence, formed a spectacle at once tender and distressing.

When Marguerite and Monsieur de Conyncks arrived, they found Claës living at an inn. His successor had not been kept waiting, and was already in possession of his office.

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XV.

Through all the preoccupations of science, the desire to see his native town, his house, his family, agitated Balthazar's mind. His daughter's letters had told him of the happy family events; he dreamed of crowning his career by a series of experiments that must lead to the solution of the great Problem, and he awaited Marguerite's arrival with extreme impatience.

The daughter threw herself into her father's arms and wept for joy. This time she came to seek a recompense for years of pain, and pardon for the exercise of her domestic authority. She seemed to herself criminal, like those great men who violate the liberties of the people for the safety of the nation. But she shuddered as she now contemplated her father and saw the change which had taken place in him since her last visit. Monsieur Conyncks shared the secret alarm of his niece, and insisted on taking Balthazar as soon as possible to Douai, where the influence of his native place might restore him to health and reason amid the happiness of a recovered domestic life.

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After the first transports of the heart were over, — which were far warmer on Balthazar's part than Marguerite had expected, — he showed a singular state of feeling towards his daughter. He expressed regret at receiving her in a miserable inn, inquired her tastes and wishes, and asked what she would have to eat, with the eagerness of a lover; his manner was even that of a culprit seeking to propitiate a judge.

Marguerite knew her father so well that she guessed the motive of this solicitude; she felt sure he had contracted debts in the town which he wished to pay before his departure. She observed him carefully for a time, and saw the human heart in all its nakedness. Balthazar had dwindled from his true self. The consciousness of his abasement, and the isolation of his life in the pursuit of science made him timid and childish in all matters not connected with his favorite occupations. His daughter awed him; the remembrance of her past devotion, of the energy she had displayed, of the powers he had allowed her to take away from him, of the wealth now at her command, and the indefinable feelings that had preyed upon him ever since the day when he had abdicated a paternity he had long neglected, — all these things affected his mind towards her, and increased her importance in his eyes. Conyncks was nothing to him beside Marguerite; he saw only his daughter, he thought

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only of her, and seemed to fear her, as certain weak husbands fear a superior woman who rules them. When he raised his eyes and looked at her, Marguerite noticed with distress an expression of fear, like that of a child detected in a fault. The noble girl was unable to reconcile the majestic and terrible expression of that bald head, denuded by science and by toil, with the puerile smile, the eager servility exhibited on the lips and countenance of the old man. She suffered from the contrast of that greatness to that littleness, and resolved to use her utmost influence to restore her father's sense of dignity before the solemn day on which he was to reappear in the bosom of his family. Her first step when they were alone was to ask him, —

"Do you owe anything here?"

Balthazar colored, and replied with an embarrassed air: —

"I don't know, but Lemulquinier can tell you. That worthy fellow knows more about my affairs than I do myself."

Marguerite rang for the valet: when he came she studied, almost involuntarily, the faces of the two old men.

"What does monsieur want?" asked Lemulquinier.

Marguerite, who was all pride and dignity, felt an oppression at her heart as she perceived from the tone and manner of the servant that some mortifying

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familiarity had grown up between her father and the companion of his labors.

"My father cannot make out the account of what he owes in this place without you," she said.

"Monsieur," began Lemulquinier, "owes —"

At these words Balthazar made a sign to his valet which Marguerite intercepted; it humiliated her.

"Tell me all that my father owes," she said.

"Monsieur owes, here, about three thousand francs to an apothecary who is a wholesale dealer in drugs; he has supplied us with pearl-ash and lead, and zinc and the reagents —"

"Is that all?" asked Marguerite.

Again Balthazar made a sign to Lemulquinier, who replied, as if under a spell, —

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Very good," she said, "I will give them to you."

Balthazar kissed her joyously and said, —

"You are an angel, my child."

He breathed at his ease and glanced at her with eyes that were less sad; and yet, in spite of this apparent joy, Marguerite easily detected the signs of deep anxiety upon his face, and felt certain that the three thousand francs represented only the pressing debts of his laboratory.

"Be frank with me, father," she said, letting him seat her on his knee; "you owe more than that. Tell me

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all, and come back to your home without an element of fear in the midst of the general joy."

"My dear Marguerite," he said, taking her hands and kissing them with a grace that seemed a memory of his youth, "you would scold me—"

"No," she said.

"Truly?" he asked, giving way to childish expressions of delight. "Can I tell you all? will you pay—"

"Yes," she said, repressing the tears which came into her eyes.

"Well, I owe — oh! I dare not—"

"Tell me, father."

"It is a great deal."

She clasped her hands, with a gesture of despair.

"I owe thirty thousand francs to Messieurs Protez and Chiffreville."

"Thirty thousand francs," she said, "is just the sum I have laid by. I am glad to give it to you," she added, respectfully kissing his brow.

He rose, took his daughter in his arms and whirled about the room, dancing her as though she were an infant; then he placed her in the chair where she had been sitting, and exclaimed:—

"My darling child! my treasure of love! I was half-dead: the Chiffrevilles have written me three threatening letters; they were about to sue me,— me, who would have made their fortune!"

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"Father," said Marguerite in accents of despair, "are you still searching?"

"Yes, still searching," he said, with the smile of a madman, "and I shall FIND. If you could only understand the point we have reached —"

"We? who are we?"

"I mean Mulquinier: he has understood me, he loves me. Poor fellow! he is devoted to me."

Conyncks entered at the moment and interrupted the conversation. Marguerite made a sign to her father to say no more, fearing lest he should lower himself in her uncle's eyes. She was frightened at the ravages thought had made in that noble mind, absorbed in searching for the solution of a problem that was perhaps insoluble. Balthazar, who saw and knew nothing outside of his furnaces, seemed not to realize the liberation of his fortune.

On the morrow they started for Flanders. During the journey Marguerite gained some confused light upon the position in which Lemulquinier and her father stood to each other. The valet had acquired an ascendency over his master such as common men without education are able to obtain over great minds to whom they feel themselves necessary; such men, taking advantage of concession after concession, aim at complete dominion with the persistency that comes of a fixed idea. In this case the master had contracted

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for the man the sort of affection that grows out of habit, like that of a workman for his creative tool, or an Arab for the horse that gives him freedom. Marguerite studied the signs of this tyranny, resolving to withdraw her father from its humiliating yoke if it were real.

They stopped several days in Paris on the way home, to enable Marguerite to pay off her father's debts and request the manufacturers of chemical products to send nothing to Douai without first informing her of any orders given by Claës. She persuaded her father to change his style of dress and buy clothes that were suitable to a man of his station. This corporal restoration gave Balthazar a certain physical dignity which augured well for a change in his ideas; and Marguerite, joyous in the thought of all the surprises that awaited her father when he entered his own house, started for Douai.

Nine miles from the town Balthazar was met by Félicie on horseback, escorted by her two brothers, Emmanuel, Pierquin, and some of the nearest friends of the three families. The journey had necessarily diverted the chemist's mind from its habitual thoughts; the aspect of his own Flanders acted on his heart; when, therefore, he saw the joyous company of his family and friends gathering about him his emotion was so keen that the tears came to his eyes, his voice trembled, his

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eyelids reddened, and he held his children in so passionate an embrace, seeming unable to release them, that the spectators of the scene were moved to tears.

When at last he saw the House of Claës he turned pale, and sprang from the carriage with the agility of a young man; he breathed the air of the court-yard with delight, and looked about him at the smallest details with a pleasure that could express itself only in gestures: he drew himself erect, and his whole countenance renewed its youth. The tears came into his eyes when he entered the parlor and noticed the care with which his daughter had replaced the old silver candelabra that he formerly had sold, — a visible sign that all the other disasters had been repaired. Breakfast was served in the dining-room, whose sideboards and shelves were covered with curios and silver-ware not less valuable than the treasures that formerly stood there. Though the family meal lasted a long time, it was still too short for the narratives which Balthazar exacted from each of his children. The reaction of his moral being caused by this return to his home wedded him once more to family happiness, and he was again a father. His manners recovered their former dignity. At first the delight of recovering possession kept him from dwelling on the means by which the recovery had been brought about. His joy therefore was full and unalloyed.

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Breakfast over, the four children, the father and Pierquin went into the parlor, where Balthazar saw with some uneasiness a number of legal papers which the notary's clerk had laid upon a table, by which he was standing as if to assist his chief. The children all sat down, and Balthazar, astonished, remained standing before the fireplace.

"This," said Pierquin, "is the guardianship account which Monsieur Claës renders to his children. It is not very amusing," he added, laughing after the manner of notaries who generally assume a lively tone in speaking of serious matters, "but I must really oblige you to listen to it."

Though the phrase was natural enough under the circumstances, Monsieur Claës, whose conscience recalled his past life, felt it to be a reproach, and his brow clouded.

The clerk began the reading. Balthazar's amazement increased as little by little the statement unfolded the facts. In the first place, the fortune of his wife at the time of her decease was declared to have been sixteen hundred thousand francs or thereabouts; and the summing up of the account showed clearly that the portion of each child was intact and as well-invested as if the best and wisest father had controlled it. In consequence of this the House of Claës was free from all lien, Balthazar was master of it; moreover, his rural property

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was likewise released from incumbrance. When all the papers connected with these matters were signed, Pierquin presented the receipts for the repayment of the moneys formerly borrowed, and releases of the various liens on the estates.

Balthazar, conscious that he had recovered the honor of his manhood, the life of a father, the dignity of a citizen, fell into a chair, and looked about for Marguerite; but she, with the instinctive delicacy of her sex, had left the room during the reading of the papers, as if to see that all the arrangements for the fête were properly prepared. Each member of the family understood the old man's wish when the failing humid eyes sought for the daughter, — who was seen by all present, with the eyes of the soul, as an angel of strength and light within the house. Gabriel went to find her. Hearing her step, Balthazar ran to clasp her in his arms.

"Father," she said, at the foot of the stairs, where the old man caught her and strained her to his breast, "I implore you not to lessen your sacred authority. Thank me before the family for carrying out your wishes, and be the sole author of the good that has been done here."

Balthazar lifted his eyes to heaven, then looked at his daughter, folded his arms, and said, after a pause, during which his face recovered an expression his children had not seen upon it for ten long years, —

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"Pépita, why are you not here to praise our child!"

He strained Marguerite to him, unable to utter another word, and went back to the parlor.

"My children," he said, with the nobility of demeanor that in former days had made him so imposing, "we all owe gratitude and thanks to my daughter Marguerite for the wisdom and courage with which she has fulfilled my intentions and carried out my plans, when I, too absorbed by my labors, gave the reins of our domestic government into her hands."

"Ah, now!" cried Pierquin, looking at the clock, "we must read the marriage contracts. But they are not my affair, for the law forbids me to draw up such deeds between my relations and myself. Monsieur Raparlier is coming."

The friends of the family, invited to the dinner given to celebrate Claës's return and the signing of the marriage contracts, now began to arrive; and their servants brought in the wedding-presents. The company quickly assembled, and the scene was imposing as much from the quality of the persons present as from the elegance of the toilettes. The three families, thus united through the happiness of their children, seemed to vie with each other in contributing to the splendor of the occasion. The parlor was soon filled with the charming gifts that are made to bridal couples. Gold shimmered and glistened; silks and satins, cashmere

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shawls, necklaces, jewels, afforded as much delight to those who gave as to those who received; enjoyment that was almost childlike shone on every face, and the mere value of the magnificent presents was lost sight of by the spectators, — who often busy themselves in estimating it out of curiosity.

The ceremonial forms used for generations in the Claës family for solemnities of this nature now began. The parents alone were seated, all present stood before them at a little distance. To the left of the parlor on the garden side were Gabriel and Mademoiselle Conyncks, next to them stood Monsieur de Solis and Marguerite, and farther on, Félicie and Pierquin. Balthazar and Monsieur Conyncks, the only persons who were seated, occupied two armchairs beside the notary who, for this occasion, had taken Pierquin's duty. Jean stood behind his father. A score of ladies elegantly dressed, and a few men chosen from among the nearest relatives of the Pierquins, the Conyncks, and the Claës, the mayor of Douai, who was to marry the couples, the twelve witnesses chosen from among the nearest friends of the three families, all, even the curate of Saint-Pierre, remained standing and formed an imposing circle at the end of the parlor next the court-yard. This homage paid by the whole assembly to Paternity, which at such a moment shines with almost regal majesty, gave to the scene a certain antique character. It

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was the only moment for sixteen long years when Balthazar forgot the Alkahest.

Monsieur Raparlier went up to Marguerite and her sister and asked if all the persons invited to the ceremony and to the dinner had arrived; on receiving an affirmative reply, he returned to his station and took up the marriage contract between Marguerite and Monsieur de Solis, which was the first to be read, when suddenly the door of the parlor opened and Lemulquinier entered, his face flaming.

"Monsieur! monsieur!" he cried.

Balthazar flung a look of despair at Marguerite, then, making her a sign, he drew her into the garden. The whole assembly were conscious of a shock.

"I dared not tell you, my child," said the father, "but since you have done so much, you will save me, I know, from this last trouble. Lemulquinier lent me all his savings — the fruit of twenty years' economy — for my last experiment, which failed. He has come, no doubt, finding that I am once more rich, to insist on having them back. Ah! my angel, give them to him; you owe him your father; he alone consoled me in my troubles, he alone has had faith in me, — without him I should have died."

"Monsieur! monsieur!" cried Lemulquinier.

"What is it?" said Balthazar, turning round.

"A diamond!"

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Claës sprang into the parlor and saw the stone in the hands of the old valet, who whispered in his ear, —

"I have been to the laboratory."

The chemist, forgetting everything about him, cast a terrible look on the old Fleming which meant, "You went before me to the laboratory!"

"Yes," continued Lemulquinier, "I found the diamond in the china capsule which communicated with the battery which we left to work, monsieur — and see!" he added, showing a white diamond of octahedral form, whose brilliancy drew the astonished gaze of all present.

"My children, my friends," said Balthazar, "forgive my old servant, forgive me! This event will drive me mad. The chance work of seven years has produced — without me — a discovery I have sought for sixteen years. How? My God, I know not — yes, I left sulphide of carbon under the influence of a Voltaic pile, whose action ought to have been watched from day to day. During my absence the power of God has worked in my laboratory, but I was not there to note its progressive effects! Is it not awful? Oh, cursed exile! cursed chance! Alas! had I watched that slow, that sudden — what can I call it? — crystallization, transformation, in short that miracle, then, then my children would have been richer still. Though this result is not the solution of the Problem which I seek, the

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first rays of my glory would have shone from that diamond upon my native country, and this hour, which our satisfied affections have made so happy, would have glowed with the sunlight of Science."

Every one kept silence in the presence of such a man. The disconnected words wrung from him by his anguish were too sincere not to be sublime.

Suddenly, Balthazar drove back his despair into the depths of his own being, and cast upon the assembly a majestic look which affected the souls of all; he took the diamond and offered it to Marguerite, saying, —

"It is thine, my angel."

Then he dismissed Lemulquinier with a gesture, and motioned to the notary, saying, "Go on."

The two words sent a shudder of emotion through the company such as Talma in certain rôles produced among his auditors. Balthazar, as he reseated himself, said in a low voice, —

"To-day I must be a father only."

Marguerite hearing the words went up to him and caught his hand and kissed it respectfully.

"No man was ever greater," said Emmanuel, when his bride returned to him; "no man was ever so mighty; another would have gone mad."

After the three contracts were read and signed, the company hastened to question Balthazar as to the manner in which the diamond had been formed; but

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he could tell them nothing about so strange an accident. He looked through the window at his garret and pointed to it with an angry gesture.

"Yes, the awful power resulting from a movement of fiery matter which no doubt produces metals, diamonds," he said, "was manifested there for one moment, by one chance."

"That chance was of course some natural effect," whispered a guest belonging to the class of people who are ready with an explanation of everything. "At any rate, it is something saved out of all he has wasted."

"Let us forget it," said Balthazar, addressing his friends; "I beg you to say no more about it to-day."

Marguerite took her father's arm to lead the way to the reception-rooms of the front house, where a sumptuous fête had been prepared. As he entered the gallery, followed by his guests, he beheld it filled with pictures and garnished with choice flowers.

"Pictures!" he exclaimed, "pictures! — and some of the old ones!"

He stopped short; his brow clouded; for a moment grief overcame him; he felt the weight of his wrong-doing as the vista of his humiliation came before his eyes.

"It is all your own, father," said Marguerite, guessing the feelings that oppressed his soul.

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"Angel, whom the spirits in heaven watch and praise," he cried, "how many times have you given life to your father?"

"Then keep no cloud upon your brow, nor the least sad thought in your heart," she said, "and you will reward me beyond my hopes. I have been thinking of Lemulquinier, my darling father; the few words you said a little while ago have made me value him; perhaps I have been unjust to him; he ought to remain your humble friend. Emmanuel has laid by nearly sixty thousand francs which he has economized, and we will give them to Lemulquinier. After serving you so well the man ought to be made comfortable for his remaining years. Do not be uneasy about us. Monsieur de Solis and I intend to lead a quiet, peaceful life, — a life without luxury; we can well afford to lend you that money until you are able to return it."

"Ah, my daughter! never forsake me; continue to be thy father's providence."

When they entered the reception-rooms Balthazar found them restored and furnished as elegantly as in former days. The guests presently descended to the dining-room on the ground-floor by the grand staircase, on every step of which were rare plants and flowering shrubs. A silver service of exquisite workmanship, the gift of Gabriel to his father, attracted all eyes to a luxury which was surprising to the inhabitants of

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a town where such luxury is traditional. The servants of Monsieur Conyncks and of Pierquin, as well as those of the Claës household, were assembled to serve the repast. Seeing himself once more at the head of that table, surrounded by friends and relatives and happy faces beaming with heartfelt joy, Balthazar, behind whose chair stood Lemulquinier, was overcome by emotions so deep and so imposing that all present kept silence, as men are silent before great sorrows or great joys.

"Dear children," he cried, "you have killed the fatted calf to welcome home the prodigal father."

These words, in which the father judged himself (and perhaps prevented others from judging him more severely), were spoken so nobly that all present shed tears; they were the last expression of sadness, however, and the general happiness soon took on the merry, animated character of a family fête.

Immediately after dinner the principal people of the city began to arrive for the ball, which proved worthy of the almost classic splendor of the restored House of Claës. The three marriages followed this happy day, and gave occasion to many fêtes, and balls, and dinners, which involved Balthazar for some months in the vortex of social life. His eldest son and his wife removed to an estate near Cambrai belonging to Monsieur Conyncks, who was unwilling to separate from his

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daughter. Madame Pierquin also left her father's house to do the honors of a fine mansion which Pierquin had built, and where he desired to live in all the dignity of rank; for his practice was sold, and his uncle des Racquets had died and left him a large property scraped together by slow economy. Jean went to Paris to finish his education, and Monsieur and Madame de Solis alone remained with their father in the House of Claës. Balthazar made over to them the family home in the rear house, and took up his own abode on the second floor of the front building.

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XVI.

MARGUERITE continued to keep watch over her father's material comfort, aidèd in the sweet task by Emmanuel. The noble girl received from the hands of love that most envied of all garlands, the wreath that happiness entwines and constancy keeps ever fresh. No couple ever afforded a better illustration of the complete, acknowledged, spotless felicity which all women cherish in their dreams. The union of two beings so courageous in the trials of life, who had loved each other through years with so sacred an affection, drew forth the respectful admiration of the whole community. Monsieur de Solis, who had long held an appointment as inspector-general of the University, resigned those functions to enjoy his happiness more freely, and remained at Douai where every one did such homage to his character and attainments that his name was proposed as candidate for the Electoral college whenever he should reach the required age. Marguerite, who had shown herself so strong in adversity, became in prosperity a sweet and tender woman.

Throughout the following year Claës was grave and

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preoccupied; and yet, though he made a few inexpensive experiments for which his ordinary income sufficed, he seemed to neglect his laboratory. Marguerite restored all the old customs of the House of Claës, and gave a family fête every month in honor of her father, at which the Pierquins and the Conyncks were present; and she also received the upper ranks of society one day in the week at a "café" which became celebrated. Though frequently absent-minded, Claës took part in all these assemblages and became, to please his daughter, so willingly a man of the world that the family were able to believe he had renounced his search for the solution of the great problem.

Three years went by. In 1828 family affairs called Emmanuel de Solis to Spain. Although there were three numerous branches between himself and the inheritance of the house of Solis, yellow fever, old age, barrenness, and other caprices of fortune, combined to make him the last lineal descendant of the family and heir to the titles and estates of his ancient house. Moreover, by one of those curious chances which seem impossible except in a book, the house of Solis had acquired the territory and titles of the Comtes de Nourho. Marguerite did not wish to separate from her husband, who was to stay in Spain long enough to settle his affairs, and she was, moreover, curious to see the castle of Casa-Réal where her mother had passed her

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childhood, and the city of Granada, the cradle of the de Solis family. She left Douai, consigning the care of the house to Martha, Josette, and Lemulquinier. Balthazar, to whom Marguerite had proposed a journey into Spain, declined to accompany her on the ground of his advanced age; but certain experiments which he had long meditated, and to which he now trusted for the realization of his hopes were the real reason of his refusal.

The Comte and Comtesse de Solis y Nourho were detained in Spain longer than they intended. Marguerite gave birth to a son. It was not until the middle of 1830 that they reached Cadiz, intending to embark for Italy on their way back to France. There, however, they received a letter from Félicie conveying disastrous news. Within a few months, their father had completely ruined himself. Gabriel and Pierquin were obliged to pay Lemulquinier a monthly stipend for the bare necessaries of the household. The old valet had again sacrificed his little property to his master. Balthazar was no longer willing to see any one, and would not even admit his children to the house. Martha and Josette were dead. The coachman, the cook, and the other servants had long been dismissed; the horses and carriages were sold. Though Lemulquinier maintained the utmost secrecy as to his master's proceedings, it was believed that the thousand francs

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supplied by Gabriel and Pierquin were spent chiefly on experiments. The small amount of provisions which the old valet purchased in the town seemed to show that the two old men contented themselves with the barest necessaries. To prevent the sale of the House of Claës, Gabriel and Pierquin were paying the interest of the sums which their father had again borrowed on it. None of his children had the slightest influence upon the old man, who at seventy years of age displayed extraordinary energy in bending everything to his will, even in matters that were trivial. Gabriel, Conyncks, and Pierquin had decided not to pay off his debts.

This letter changed all Marguerite's travelling plans, and she immediately took the shortest road to Douai. Her new fortune and her past savings enabled her to pay off Balthazar's debts; but she wished to do more, she wished to obey her mother's last injunction and save him from sinking dishonored to the grave. She alone could exercise enough ascendency over the old man to keep him from completing the work of ruin, at an age when no fruitful toil could be expected from his enfeebled faculties. But she was also anxious to control him without wounding his susceptibilities, — not wishing to imitate the children of Sophocles, in case her father neared the scientific result for which he had sacrificed so much.

Monsieur and Madame de Solis reached Flanders in

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the last days of September, 1831, and arrived at Douai during the morning. Marguerite ordered the coachman to drive to the house in the rue de Paris, which they found closed. The bell was loudly rung, but no one answered. A shopkeeper left his door-step, to which he had been attracted by the noise of the carriages; others were at their windows to enjoy a sight of the return of the de Solis family to whom all were attached, enticed also by a vague curiosity as to what would happen in that house on Marguerite's return to it. The shopkeeper told Monsieur de Solis's valet that old Claës had gone out an hour before, and that Monsieur Lemulquinier was no doubt taking him to walk on the ramparts.

Marguerite sent for a locksmith to force the door, — glad to escape a scene in case her father, as Félicie had written, should refuse to admit her into the house. Meantime Emmanuel went to meet the old man and prepare him for the arrival of his daughter, despatching a servant to notify Monsieur and Madame Pierquin.

When the door was opened, Marguerite went directly to the parlor. Horror overcame her and she trembled when she saw the walls as bare as if a fire had swept over them. The glorious carved panellings of Van Huysum and the portrait of the great Claës had been sold. The dining-room was empty: there was nothing in it but two straw chairs and a common deal table, on

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which Marguerite, terrified, saw two plates, two bowls, two forks and spoons, and the remains of a salt herring which Claës and his servant had evidently just eaten. In a moment she had flown through her father's portion of the house, every room of which exhibited the same desolation as the parlor and dining-room. The idea of the Alkahest had swept like a conflagration through the building. Her father's bedroom had a bed, one chair, and one table, on which stood a miserable pewter candlestick with a tallow candle burned almost to the socket. The house was so completely stripped that not so much as a curtain remained at the windows. Every object of the smallest value, — everything, even the kitchen utensils, had been sold.

Moved by that feeling of curiosity which never entirely leaves us even in moments of misfortune, Marguerite entered Lemulquinier's chamber and found it as bare as that of his master. In a half-opened table-drawer she saw a pawnbroker's ticket for the old servant's watch which he had pledged some days before. She ran to the laboratory and found it filled with scientific instruments, the same as ever. Then she returned to her own appartement and ordered the door to be broken open — her father had respected it!

Marguerite burst into tears and forgave her father all. In the midst of his devastating fury he had stopped short, restrained by paternal feeling and the gratitude

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he owed to his daughter! This proof of tenderness, coming to her at a moment when despair had reached its climax, brought about in Marguerite's soul one of those moral reactions against which the coldest hearts are powerless. She returned to the parlor to wait her father's arrival, in a state of anxiety that was cruelly aggravated by doubt and uncertainty. In what condition was she about to see him? Ruined, decrepit, suffering, enfeebled by the fasts his pride compelled him to undergo? Would he have his reason? Tears flowed unconsciously from her eyes as she looked about the desecrated sanctuary. The images of her whole life, her past efforts, her useless precautions, her childhood, her mother happy and unhappy, — all, even her little Joseph smiling on that scene of desolation, all were parts of a poem of unutterable melancholy.

Marguerite foresaw an approaching misfortune, yet she little expected the catastrophe which was about to close her father's life, — that life at once so grand and yet so miserable.

The condition of Monsieur Claës was no secret in the community. To the lasting shame of men, there were not in all Douai two hearts generous enough to do honor to the perseverance of this man of genius. In the eyes of the world Balthazar was a man to be condemned, a bad father who had squandered six fortunes, millions, who was actually seeking the philosopher's

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stone in the nineteenth century, this enlightened century, this sceptical century, this century! — etc. They calumniated his purposes and branded him with the name of "alchemist," casting up to him in mockery that he was trying to make gold. Ah! what eulogies are uttered on this great century of ours, in which, as in all the others, genius is smothered under an indifference as brutal as that of the age in which Dante died, and Tasso and Cervantes and *tutti quanti*. The people are as backward as kings in understanding the creations of genius.

These opinions on the subject of Balthazar Claës filtered, little by little, from the upper society of Douai to the bourgeoisie, and from the bourgeoisie to the lower classes. The old chemist excited pity among persons of his own rank, satirical curiosity among the others, — two sentiments big with contempt and with the *vae victis* with which the masses assail a man of genius when they see him in misfortune. Persons often stopped before the House of Claës to show each other the rose window of the garret where so much gold and so much coal had been consumed in smoke. When Balthazar passed along the streets they pointed to him with their fingers; often, on catching sight of him, a mocking jest or a word of pity would escape the lips of a workingman or some mere child. But Lemulquinier was careful to tell his master it was homage; he could deceive

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him with impunity, for though the old man's eyes retained the sublime clearness which results from the habit of living among great thoughts, his sense of hearing was enfeebled.

To most of the peasantry, and to all vulgar and superstitious minds, Balthazar Claës was a sorcerer. The noble old mansion, once named by common consent "the House of Claës," was now called in the suburbs and the country districts "the Devil's House." Every outward sign, even the face of Lemulquinier, confirmed the ridiculous beliefs that were current about Balthazar. When the old servant went to market to purchase the few provisions necessary for their subsistence, picking out the cheapest he could find, insults were flung in as make-weights, — just as butchers slip bones into their customers' meat, — and he was fortunate, poor creature, if some superstitious market-woman did not refuse to sell him his meagre pittance lest she be damned by contact with an imp of hell.

Thus the feelings of the whole town of Douai were hostile to the grand old man and to his attendant. The neglected state of their clothes added to this repulsion; they went about clothed like paupers who have seen better days, and who strive to keep a decent appearance and are ashamed to beg. It was probable that sooner or later Balthazar would be insulted in the streets. Pierquin, feeling how degrading to the family any pub-

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lic insult would be, had for some time past sent two or three of his own servants to follow the old man whenever he went out, and keep him in sight at a little distance, for the purpose of protecting him if necessary, — the revolution of July not having contributed to make the citizens respectful.

By one of those fatalities which can never be explained, Claës and Lemulquinier had gone out early in the morning, thus evading the secret guardianship of Monsieur and Madame Pierquin. On their way back from the ramparts they sat down to sun themselves on a bench in the place Saint-Jacques, an open space crossed by children on their way to school. Catching sight from a distance of the defenceless old men, whose faces brightened as they sat basking in the sun, a crowd of boys began to talk of them. Generally, children's chatter ends in laughter; on this occasion the laughter led to jokes of which they did not know the cruelty. Seven or eight of the first-comers stood at a little distance, and examined the strange old faces with smothered laughter and remarks which attracted Lemulquinier's attention.

"Hi! do you see that one with a head as smooth as my knee?"

"Yes."

"Well, he was born a Wise Man."

"My papa says he makes gold," said another.

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The youngest of the troop, who had his basket full of provisions and was devouring a slice of bread and butter, advanced to the bench and said boldly to Lemulquinier, —

"Monsieur, is it true you make pearls and diamonds?"

"Yes, my little man," replied the valet, smiling and tapping him on the cheek; "we will give you some if you study well."

"Ah! monsieur, give me some, too," was the general exclamation.

The boys all rushed together like a flock of birds, and surrounded the old men. Balthazar, absorbed in meditation from which he was drawn by these sudden cries, made a gesture of amazement which caused a general shout of laughter.

"Come, come, boys; be respectful to a great man," said Lemulquinier.

"Hi, the old harlequin!" cried the lads; "the old sorcerer! you are sorcerers! sorcerers! sorcerers!"

Lemulquinier sprang to his feet and threatened the crowd with his cane; they all ran to a little distance, picking up stones and mud. A workman who was eating his breakfast near by, seeing Lemulquinier brandish his cane to drive the boys away, thought he had struck them, and took their part, crying out, —

"Down with the sorcerers!"

The boys, feeling themselves encouraged, flung their

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missiles at the old men, just as the Comte de Solis, accompanied by Pierquin's servants, appeared at the farther end of the square. The latter were too late, however, to save the old man and his valet from being pelted with mud. The shock was given. Balthazar, whose faculties had been preserved by a chastity of spirit natural to students absorbed in a quest of discovery that annihilates all passions, now suddenly divined, by the phenomenon of introsusception, the true meaning of the scene: his decrepit body could not sustain the frightful reaction he underwent in his feelings, and he fell, struck with paralysis, into the arms of Lemulquinier, who brought him to his home on a shutter, attended by his sons-in-law and their servants. No power could prevent the population of Douai from following the body of the old man to the door of his house, where Félicie and her children, Jean, Marguerite, and Gabriel, whom his sister had sent for, were waiting to receive him.

The arrival of the old man gave rise to a frightful scene; he struggled less against the assaults of death than against the horror of seeing that his children had entered the house and penetrated the secret of his impoverished life. A bed was at once made up in the parlor and every care bestowed upon the stricken man, whose condition, towards evening, allowed hopes that his life might be preserved. The paralysis, though

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skilfully treated, kept him for some time in a state of semi-childhood; and when by degrees it relaxed, the tongue was found to be especially affected, perhaps because the old man's anger had concentrated all his forces upon it at the moment when he was about to apostrophize the children.

This incident roused a general indignation throughout the town. By a law, up to that time unknown, which guides the affections of the masses, this event brought back all hearts to Monsieur Claës. He became once more a great man; he excited the admiration and received the good-will that a few hours earlier were denied to him. Men praised his patience, his strength of will, his courage, his genius. The authorities wished to arrest all those who had a share in dealing him this blow. Too late, — the evil was done! The Claës family were the first to beg that the matter might be allowed to drop.

Marguerite ordered furniture to be brought into the parlor, and the denuded walls to be hung with silk; and when, a few days after his seizure, the old father recovered his faculties and found himself once more in a luxurious room surrounded by all that makes life easy, he tried to express his belief that his daughter Marguerite had returned. At that moment she entered the room. When Balthazar caught sight of her he colored, and his eyes grew moist, though the tears did not fall.

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He was able to press his daughter's hand with his cold fingers, putting into that pressure all the thoughts, all the feelings he no longer had the power to utter. There was something holy and solemn in that farewell of the brain which still lived, of the heart which gratitude revived. Worn out by fruitless efforts, exhausted in the long struggle with the gigantic problem, desperate perhaps at the oblivion which awaited his memory, this giant among men was about to die. His children surrounded him with respectful affection; his dying eyes were cheered with images of plenty and the touching picture of his prosperous and noble family. His every look — by which alone he could manifest his feelings — was unchangeably affectionate; his eyes acquired such variety of expression that they had, as it were, a language of light, easy to comprehend.

Marguerite paid her father's debts, and restored a modern splendor to the House of Claës which removed all outward signs of its decay. She never left the old man's bedside, endeavoring to divine his every thought and accomplish his slightest wish.

Some months went by with those alternations of better and worse which attend the struggle of life and death in old people; every morning his children came to him and spent the day in the parlor, dining by his bedside and only leaving him when he went to sleep for the night. The occupation which gave him most

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pleasure, among the many with which his family sought to enliven him, was the reading of newspapers, to which the political events then occurring gave a special interest. Monsieur Claës listened attentively as Monsieur de Solis read them aloud beside his bed.

Towards the close of the year 1832, Balthazar passed an extremely critical night, during which Monsieur Pierquin, the doctor, was summoned by the nurse, who was greatly alarmed at the sudden change which took place in the patient. For the rest of the night the doctor remained to watch him, fearing he might at any moment expire in the throes of inward convulsion, whose effects were like those of a last agony.

The old man made incredible efforts to shake off the bonds of his paralysis; he tried to speak and moved his tongue, unable to make a sound; his flaming eyes emitted thoughts; his drawn features expressed an untold agony; his fingers writhed in desperation; the sweat stood in drops upon his brow. In the morning when his children came to his bedside and kissed him with an affection which the sense of coming death made day by day more ardent and more eager, he showed none of his usual satisfaction at these signs of their tenderness. Emmanuel, instigated by the doctor, hastened to open the newspaper to try if the usual reading might not relieve the inward crisis in which Balthazar was evidently struggling. As he unfolded the sheet he saw

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the words, "DISCOVERY OF THE ABSOLUTE," — which startled him, and he read a paragraph to Marguerite concerning a sale made by a celebrated Polish mathematician of the secret of the Absolute. Though Emmanuel read in a low voice, and Marguerite signed to him to omit the passage, Balthazar heard it.

Suddenly the dying man raised himself by his wrists and cast on his frightened children a look which struck like lightning; the hairs that fringed the bald head stirred, the wrinkles quivered, the features were illumined with spiritual fires, a breath passed across that face and rendered it sublime; he raised a hand, clenched in fury, and uttered with a piercing cry the famous word of Archimedes, "EUREKA!" — I have found.

He fell back upon his bed with the dull sound of an inert body, and died, uttering an awful moan, — his convulsed eyes expressing to the last, when the doctor closed them, the regret of not bequeathing to Science the secret of an Enigma whose veil was rent away, — too late! — by the fleshless fingers of Death.

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THE HIDDEN MASTERPIECE.

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THE HIDDEN MASTERPIECE.

I.

On a cold morning in December, towards the close of the year 1612, a young man, whose clothing betrayed his poverty, was standing before the door of a house in the Rue des Grands-Augustins, in Paris. After walking to and fro for some time with the hesitation of a lover who fears to approach his mistress, however complying she may be, he ended by crossing the threshold and asking if Maître François Porbus were within. At the affirmative answer of an old woman who was sweeping out one of the lower rooms the young man slowly mounted the stairway, stopping from time to time and hesitating, like a newly fledged courtier doubtful as to what sort of reception the king might grant him.

When he reached the upper landing of the spiral ascent, he paused a moment before laying hold of a grotesque knocker which ornamented the door of the *atelier* where the famous painter of Henry IV. — neglected by Marie de Medicis for Rubens — was probably at work. The young man felt the strong sensation which vibrates in the soul of great artists when, in the flush of youth and of their ardor for art, they approach a man of genius or a masterpiece. In all human sentiments there are, as it were, primeval flowers bred of noble enthusiasms,

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which droop and fade from year to year, till joy is but a memory and glory a lie. Amid such fleeting emotions nothing so resembles love as the young passion of an artist who tastes the first delicious anguish of his destined fame and woe, — a passion daring yet timid, full of vague confidence and sure discouragement. Is there a man, slender in fortune, rich in his spring-time of genius, whose heart has not beaten loudly as he approached a master of his art? If there be, that man will forever lack some heart-string, some touch, I know not what, of his brush, some fibre in his creations, some sentiment in his poetry. When braggarts, self-satisfied and in love with themselves, step early into the fame which belongs rightly to their future achievements, they are men of genius only in the eyes of fools. If talent is to be measured by youthful shyness, by that indefinable modesty which men born to glory lose in the practice of their art, as a pretty woman loses hers among the artifices of coquetry, then this unknown young man might claim to be possessed of genuine merit. The habit of success lessens doubt; and modesty, perhaps, is doubt.

Worn down with poverty and discouragement, and dismayed at this moment by his own presumption, the young neophyte might not have dared to enter the presence of the master to whom we owe our admirable portrait of Henry IV., if chance had not thrown an unexpected assistance in his way. An old man mounted the spiral stairway. The oddity of his dress, the magnificence of his lace ruffles, the solid assurance of his deliberate step, led the youth to assume that this remarkable personage must be the patron, or at least the intimate friend, of the painter. He drew back into a corner of the landing and

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made room for the new-comer; looking at him attentively and hoping to find either the frank good-nature of the artistic temperament, or the serviceable disposition of those who promote the arts. But on the contrary he fancied he saw something diabolical in the expression of the old man's face, — something, I know not what, which has the quality of alluring the artistic mind.

Imagine a bald head, the brow full and prominent and falling with deep projection over a little flattened nose turned up at the end like the noses of Rabelais and Socrates; a laughing, wrinkled mouth; a short chin boldly chiselled and garnished with a gray beard cut into a point; sea-green eyes, faded perhaps by age, but whose pupils, contrasting with the pearl-white balls on which they floated, cast at times magnetic glances of anger or enthusiasm. The face in other respects was singularly withered and worn by the weariness of old age, and still more, it would seem, by the action of thoughts which had undermined both soul and body. The eyes had lost their lashes, and the eyebrows were scarcely traced along the projecting arches where they belonged. Imagine such a head upon a lean and feeble body, surround it with lace of dazzling whiteness worked in meshes like a fish-slice, festoon the black velvet doublet of the old man with a heavy gold chain, and you will have a faint idea of the exterior of this strange individual, to whose appearance the dusky light of the landing lent fantastic coloring. You might have thought that a canvas of Rembrandt without its frame had walked silently up the stairway, bringing with it the dark atmosphere which was the sign-manual of the great master. The old man cast a look upon the youth which was full

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of sagacity; then he rapped three times upon the door, and said, when it was opened by a man in feeble health, apparently about forty years of age, "Good-morning, maître."

Porbus bowed respectfully, and made way for his guest, allowing the youth to pass in at the same time, under the impression that he came with the old man, and taking no further notice of him; all the less perhaps because the neophyte stood still beneath the spell which holds a heaven-born painter as he sees for the first time an *atelier* filled with the materials and instruments of his art. Daylight came from a casement in the roof and fell, focussed as it were, upon a canvas which rested on an easel in the middle of the room, and which bore, as yet, only three or four chalk lines. The light thus concentrated did not reach the dark angles of the vast *atelier;* but a few wandering reflections gleamed through the russet shadows on the silvered breastplate of a horseman's cuirass of the fourteenth century as it hung from the wall, or sent sharp lines of light upon the carved and polished cornice of a dresser which held specimens of rare pottery and porcelains, or touched with sparkling points the rough-grained texture of ancient gold-brocaded curtains, flung in broad folds about the room to serve the painter as models for his drapery. Anatomical casts in plaster, fragments and torsos of antique goddesses amorously polished by the kisses of centuries, jostled each other upon shelves and brackets. Innumerable sketches, studies in the three crayons, in ink, and in red chalk covered the walls from floor to ceiling; color-boxes, bottles of oil and turpentine, easels and stools upset or standing at right angles, left but a narrow pathway to the circle of

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light thrown from the window in the roof, which fell full on the pale face of Porbus and on the ivory skull of his singular visitor.

The attention of the young man was taken exclusively by a picture destined to become famous after those days of tumult and revolution, and which even then was precious in the sight of certain opinionated individuals to whom we owe the preservation of the divine afflatus through the dark days when the life of art was in jeopardy. This noble picture represents the Mary of Egypt as she prepares to pay for her passage by the ship. It is a masterpiece, painted for Marie de Medicis, and afterwards sold by her in the days of her distress.

"I like your saint," said the old man to Porbus, "and I will give you ten golden crowns over and above the queen's offer; but as to entering into competition with her — the devil!"

"You do like her, then?"

"As for that," said the old man, "yes, and no. The good woman is well set-up, but — she is not living. You young men think you have done all when you have drawn the form correctly, and put everything in place according to the laws of anatomy. You color the features with flesh-tones, — mixed beforehand on your palette, — taking very good care to shade one side of the face darker than the other; and because you draw now and then from a nude woman standing on a table, you think you can copy nature; you fancy yourselves painters, and imagine that you have got at the secret of God's creations! Pr-r-r-r!— To be a great poet it is not enough to know the rules of syntax and write

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faultless grammar. Look at your saint, Porbus. At first sight she is admirable; but at the very next glance we perceive that she is glued to the canvas, and that we cannot walk round her. She is a silhouette with only one side, a semblance cut in outline, an image that can't turn round nor change her position. I feel no air between this arm and the background of the picture; space and depth are wanting. All is in good perspective; the atmospheric gradations are carefully observed, and yet in spite of your conscientious labor I cannot believe that this beautiful body has the warm breath of life. If I put my hand on that firm, round throat I shall find it cold as marble. No, no, my friend, blood does not run beneath that ivory skin; the purple tide of life does not swell those veins, nor stir those fibres which interlace like net-work below the translucent amber of the brow and breast. This part palpitates with life, but that other part is not living; life and death jostle each other in every detail. Here, you have a woman; there, a statue; here again, a dead body. Your creation is incomplete. You have breathed only a part of your soul into the well-beloved work. The torch of Prometheus went out in your hands over and over again; there are several parts of your painting on which the celestial flame never shone."

"But why is it so, my dear master?" said Porbus humbly, while the young man could hardly restrain a strong desire to strike the critic.

"Ah! that is the question," said the little old man. "You are floating between two systems,— between drawing and color, between the patient phlegm and honest stiffness of the old Dutch masters and the dazzling

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warmth and abounding joy of the Italians. You have tried to follow, at one and the same time, Hans Holbein and Titian, Albrecht Dürer and Paul Veronese. Well, well! it was a glorious ambition, but what is the result? You have neither the stern attraction of severity nor the deceptive magic of the chiaroscuro. See! at this place the rich, clear color of Titian has forced out the skeleton outline of Albrecht Dürer, as molten bronze might burst and overflow a slender mould. Here and there the outline has resisted the flood, and holds back the magnificent torrent of Venetian color. Your figure is neither perfectly well painted nor perfectly well drawn; it bears throughout the signs of this unfortunate indecision. If you did not feel that the fire of your genius was hot enough to weld into one the rival methods, you ought to have chosen honestly the one or the other, and thus attained the unity which conveys one aspect, at least, of life. As it is, you are true only on your middle plane. Your outlines are false; they do not round upon themselves; they suggest nothing behind them. There is truth here," said the old man, pointing to the bosom of the saint; "and here," showing the spot where the shoulder ended against the background; "but there," he added, returning to the throat, "it is all false. Do not inquire into the why and wherefore. I should fill you with despair."

The old man sat down on a stool and held his head in his hands for some minutes in silence.

"Master," said Porbus at length, "I studied that throat from the nude; but, to our sorrow, there are effects in nature which become false or impossible when placed on canvas."

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"The mission of art is not to copy nature, but to represent it. You are not an abject copyist, but a poet," cried the old man, hastily interrupting Porbus with a despotic gesture. "If it were not so, a sculptor could reach the height of his art by merely moulding a woman. Try to mould the hand of your mistress, and see what you will get, — ghastly articulations, without the slightest resemblance to her living hand; you must have recourse to the chisel of a man who, without servilely copying that hand, can give it movement and life. It is our mission to seize the mind, soul, countenance of things and beings. Effects! effects! what are they? the mere accidents of the life, and not the life itself. A hand, — since I have taken that as an example, — a hand is not merely a part of the body, it is far more; it expresses and carries on a thought which we must seize and render. Neither the painter nor the poet nor the sculptor should separate the effect from the cause, for they are indissolubly one. The true struggle of art lies there. Many a painter has triumphed through instinct without knowing this theory of art as a theory.

"Yes," continued the old man vehemently, "you draw a woman, but you do not *see* her. That is not the way to force an entrance into the arcana of Nature. Your hand reproduces, without an action of your mind, the model you copied under a master. You do not search out the secrets of form, nor follow its windings and evolutions with enough love and perseverance. Beauty is solemn and severe, and cannot be attained in that way: we must wait and watch its times and seasons, and clasp and hold it firmly ere it yields to us.

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Form is a Proteus less easily captured, more skilful to double and escape, than the Proteus of fable; it is only at the cost of struggle that we compel it to come forth in its true aspects. You young men are content with the first glimpse you get of it; or, at any rate, with the second or the third. This is not the spirit of the great warriors of art, — invincible powers, not misled by will-o'-the-wisps, but advancing always until they force Nature to lie bare in her divine integrity. That was Raphael's method," said the old man, lifting his velvet cap in homage to the sovereign of art; "his superiority came from the inward essence which seems to break from the inner to the outer of his figures. Form with him was what it is with us, — a medium by which to communicate ideas, sensations, feelings; in short, the infinite poesy of being. Every figure is a world; a portrait, whose original stands forth like a sublime vision, colored with the rainbow tints of light, drawn by the monitions of an inward voice, laid bare by a divine finger which points to the past of its whole existence as the source of its given expression. You clothe your women with delicate skins and glorious draperies of hair, but where is the blood which begets the passion or the peace of their souls, and is the cause of what you call 'effects'? Your saint is a dark woman; but this, my poor Porbus, belongs to a fair one. Your figures are pale, colored phantoms, which you present to our eyes; and you call that painting! art! Because you make something which looks more like a woman than a house, you think you have touched the goal; proud of not being obliged to write *currus venustus* or *pulcher homo* on the frame of your picture, you think yourselves majestic

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artists like our great forefathers. Ha, ha! you have not got there yet, my little men; you will use up many a crayon and spoil many a canvas before you reach that height. Undoubtedly a woman carries her head this way and her petticoats that way; her eyes soften and droop with just that look of resigned gentleness; the throbbing shadow of the eyelashes falls exactly thus upon her cheek. That is it, and — that is *not it*. What lacks? A mere nothing; but that mere nothing is ALL. You have given the shadow of life, but you have not given its fulness, its being, its — I know not what — soul, perhaps, which floats vaporously about the tabernacle of flesh; in short, that flower of life which Raphael and Titian culled. Start from the point you have now attained, and perhaps you may yet paint a worthy picture: you grew weary too soon. Mediocrity will extol your work; but the true artist smiles. O Mabuse! O my master!" added this singular person, "you were a thief; you have robbed us of your life, your knowledge, your art! But at least," he resumed after a pause, "this picture is better than the paintings of that rascally Rubens, with his mountains of Flemish flesh daubed with vermilion, his cascades of red hair, and his hurly-burly of color. At any rate, you have got the elements of color, drawing, and sentiment, — the three essential parts of art."

"But the saint is sublime, good sir!" cried the young man in a loud voice, waking from a deep revery. "These figures, the saint and the boatman, have a subtile meaning which the Italian painters cannot give. I do not know one of them who could have invented that hesitation of the boatman."

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"Does the young fellow belong to you?" asked Porbus of the old man.

"Alas, maître, forgive my boldness," said the neophyte, blushing. "I am all unknown; only a dauber by instinct. I have just come to Paris, that fountain of art and science."

"Let us see what you can do," said Porbus, giving him a red crayon and a piece of paper.

The unknown copied the saint with an easy turn of his hand.

"Oh! oh!" exclaimed the old man, "what is your name?"

The youth signed the drawing: Nicolas Poussin.

"Not bad for a beginner," said the strange being who had discoursed so wildly. "I see that it is worth while to talk art before you. I don't blame you for admiring Porbus's saint. It is a masterpiece for the world at large; only those who are behind the veil of the holy of holies can perceive its errors. But you are worthy of a lesson, and capable of understanding it. I will show you how little is needed to turn that picture into a true masterpiece. Give all your eyes and all your attention; such a chance of instruction may never fall in your way again. Your palette, Porbus."

Porbus fetched his palette and brushes. The little old man turned up his cuffs with convulsive haste, slipped his thumb through the palette charged with prismatic colors, and snatched, rather than took, the handful of brushes which Porbus held out to him. As he did so his beard, cut to a point, seemed to quiver with the eagerness of an incontinent fancy; and while he filled his brush he muttered between his teeth: —

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"Colors fit to fling out of the window with the man who ground them, — crude, false, revolting! who can paint with them?"

Then he dipped the point of his brush with feverish haste into the various tints, running through the whole scale with more rapidity than the organist of a cathedral runs up the gamut of the *O Filii* at Easter.

Porbus and Poussin stood motionless on either side of the easel, plunged in passionate contemplation.

"See, young man," said the old man without turning round, "see how with three or four touches and a faint bluish glaze you can make the air circulate round the head of the poor saint, who was suffocating in that thick atmosphere. Look how the drapery now floats, and you see that the breeze lifts it; just now it looked like heavy linen held out by pins. Observe that the satiny lustre I am putting on the bosom gives it the plump suppleness of the flesh of a young girl. See how this tone of mingled reddish-brown and ochre warms up the cold grayness of that large shadow where the blood seemed to stagnate rather than flow. Young man, young man! what I am showing you now no other master in the world can teach you. Mabuse alone knew the secret of giving life to form. Mabuse had but one pupil, and I am he. I never took a pupil, and I am an old man now. You are intelligent enough to guess at what should follow from the little that I shall show you to-day."

While he was speaking, the extraordinary old man was giving touches here and there to all parts of the picture. Here two strokes of the brush, there one, but each so telling that together they brought out a

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new painting, — a painting steeped, as it were, in light. He worked with such passionate ardor that the sweat rolled in great drops from his bald brow; and his motions seemed to be jerked out of him with such rapidity and impatience that the young Poussin fancied a demon, incased within the body of this singular being, was working his hands fantastically like those of a puppet without, or even against, the will of their owner. The unnatural brightness of his eyes, the convulsive movements which seemed the result of some mental resistance, gave to this fancy of the youth a semblance of truth which reacted upon his lively imagination. The old man worked on, muttering half to himself, half to his neophyte: —

"Paf! paf! paf! that is how we butter it on, young man. Ah! my little pats, you are right; warm up that icy tone. Come, come! — pon, pon, pon, —" he continued, touching up the spots where he had complained of a lack of life, hiding under layers of color the conflicting methods, and regaining the unity of tone essential to an ardent Egyptian.

"Now see, my little friend, it is only the last touches of the brush that count for anything. Porbus put on a hundred; I have only put on one or two. Nobody will thank us for what is underneath, remember that!"

At last the demon paused; the old man turned to Porbus and Poussin, who stood mute with admiration, and said to them, —

"It is not yet equal to my Beautiful Nut-girl; still, one can put one's name to such a work. Yes, I will sign it," he added, rising to fetch a mirror in which to look at what he had done. "Now let us go and break-

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fast. Come, both of you, to my house. I have some smoked ham and good wine. Hey! hey! in spite of the degenerate times we will talk painting; we are strong ourselves. Here is a little man," he continued, striking Nicolas Poussin on the shoulder, "who has the faculty."

Observing the shabby cap of the youth, he pulled from his belt a leathern purse from which he took two gold pieces and offered them to him, saying, —

"I buy your drawing."

"Take them," said Porbus to Poussin, seeing that the latter trembled and blushed with shame, for the young scholar had the pride of poverty; "take them, he has the ransom of two kings in his pouch."

The three left the *atelier* and proceeded, talking all the way of art, to a handsome wooden house standing near the Pont Saint-Michel, whose window-casings and arabesque decoration amazed Poussin. The embryo painter soon found himself in one of the rooms on the ground floor seated, beside a good fire, at a table covered with appetizing dishes, and, by unexpected good fortune, in company with two great artists who treated him with kindly attention.

"Young man," said Porbus, observing that he was speechless, with his eyes fixed on a picture, "do not look at that too long, or you will fall into despair."

It was the Adam of Mabuse, painted by that wayward genius to enable him to get out of the prison where his creditors had kept him so long. The figure presented such fulness and force of reality that Nicolas Poussin began to comprehend the meaning of the bewildering talk of the old man. The latter looked

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at the picture with a satisfied but not enthusiastic manner, which seemed to say, "I have done better myself."

"There is life in the form," he remarked. "My poor master surpassed himself there; but observe the want of truth in the background. The man is living, certainly; he rises and is coming towards us; but the atmosphere, the sky, the air that we breathe, see, feel, — where are they? Besides, that is only a man; and the being who came first from the hand of God must needs have had something divine about him which is lacking here. Mabuse said so himself with vexation in his sober moments."

Poussin looked alternately at the old man and at Porbus with uneasy curiosity. He turned to the latter as if to ask the name of their host, but the painter laid a finger on his lips with an air of mystery, and the young man, keenly interested, kept silence, hoping that sooner or later some word of the conversation might enable him to guess the name of the old man, whose wealth and genius were sufficiently attested by the respect which Porbus showed him, and by the marvels of art heaped together in the picturesque apartment.

Poussin, observing against the dark panelling of the wall a magnificent portrait of a woman, exclaimed aloud, "What a beautiful Giorgione!"

"No," remarked the old man, "that is only one of my early daubs."

"Zounds!" cried Poussin naïvely; "are you the king of painters?"

The old man smiled, as if long accustomed to such homage. "Maître Frenhofer," said Porbus, "could

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you order up a little of your good Rhine wine for me?"

"Two casks," answered the host; "one to pay for the pleasure of looking at your pretty sinner this morning, and the other as a mark of friendship."

"Ah! if I were not so feeble," resumed Porbus, "and if you would consent to let me see your Beautiful Nut-girl, I too could paint some lofty picture, grand and yet profound, where the forms should have the living life."

"Show my work!" exclaimed the old man, with deep emotion. "No, no! I have still to bring it to perfection. Yesterday, towards evening, I thought it was finished. Her eyes were liquid, her flesh trembled, her tresses waved — she breathed! And yet, though I have grasped the secret of rendering on a flat canvas the relief and roundness of nature, this morning at dawn I saw many errors. Ah! to attain that glorious result, I have studied to their depths the masters of color. I have analyzed and lifted, layer by layer, the colors of Titian, king of light. Like him, great sovereign of art, I have sketched my figure in light clear tones of supple yet solid color; for shadow is but an accident, — remember that, young man. Then I worked backward, as it were; and by means of half-tints, and glazings whose transparency I kept diminishing little by little, I was able to cast strong shadows deepening almost to blackness. The shadows of ordinary painters are not of the same texture as their tones of light. They are wood, brass, iron, anything you please except flesh in shadow. We feel that if the figures changed position the shady places could not be

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wiped off, and would remain dark spots which never could be made luminous. I have avoided that blunder, though many of our most illustrious painters have fallen into it. In my work you will see whiteness beneath the opacity of the broadest shadow. Unlike the crowd of ignoramuses, who fancy they draw correctly because they can paint one good vanishing line, I have not dryly outlined my figures, nor brought out superstitiously minute anatomical details; for, let me tell you, the human body does not end off with a line. In that respect sculptors get nearer to the truth of nature than we do. Nature is all curves, each wrapping or overlapping another. To speak rigorously, there is no such thing as drawing. Do not laugh, young man; no matter how strange that saying seems to you, you will understand the reasons for it one of these days. A line is a means by which man explains to himself the effect of light upon a given object; but there is no such thing as a line in nature, where all things are rounded and full. It is only in modelling that we really draw, — in other words, that we detach things from their surroundings and put them in their due relief. The proper distribution of light can alone reveal the whole body. For this reason I do not sharply define lineaments; I diffuse about their outline a haze of warm, light half-tints, so that I defy any one to place a finger on the exact spot where the parts join the groundwork of the picture. If seen near by this sort of work has a woolly effect, and is wanting in nicety and precision; but go a few steps off and the parts fall into place; they take their proper form and detach themselves, — the body turns, the limbs stand out, we feel the air circulating around them.

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"Nevertheless," he continued, sadly, "I am not satisfied; there are moments when I have my doubts. Perhaps it would be better not to sketch a single line. I ask myself if I ought not to grasp the figure first by its highest lights, and then work down to the darker portions. Is not that the method of the sun, divine painter of the universe? O Nature, Nature! who has ever caught thee in thy flights? Alas! the heights of knowledge, like the depths of ignorance, lead to unbelief. I doubt my work."

The old man paused, then resumed. "For ten years I have worked, young man; but what are ten short years in the long struggle with Nature? We do not know the time it cost Pygmalion to make the only statue that ever walked —"

He fell into a revery and remained, with fixed eyes, oblivious of all about him, playing mechanically with his knife.

"See, he is talking to his own soul," said Porbus in a low voice.

The words acted like a spell on Nicolas Poussin, filling him with the inexplicable curiosity of a true artist. The strange old man, with his white eyes fixed in stupor, became to the wondering youth something more than a man; he seemed a fantastic spirit inhabiting an unknown sphere, and waking by its touch confused ideas within the soul. We can no more define the moral phenomena of this species of fascination than we can render in words the emotions excited in the heart of an exile by a song which recalls his fatherland. The contempt which the old man affected to pour upon the noblest efforts of art, his wealth, his manners, the respectful deference shown to him by Porbus, his work guarded so secretly,

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— a work of patient toil, a work no doubt of genius, judging by the head of the Virgin which Poussin had so naïvely admired, and which, beautiful beside even the Adam of Mabuse, betrayed the imperial touch of a great artist, — in short, everything about the strange old man seemed beyond the limits of human nature. The rich imagination of the youth fastened upon the one perceptible and clear clew to the mystery of this supernatural being, — the presence of the artistic nature, that wild impassioned nature to which such mighty powers have been confided, which too often abuses those powers, and drags cold reason and common souls, and even lovers of art, over stony and arid places, where for such there is neither pleasure nor instruction; while to the artistic soul itself, — that white-winged angel of sportive fancy, — epics, works of art, and visions rise along the way. It is a nature, an essence, mocking yet kind, fruitful though destitute. Thus, for the enthusiastic Poussin, the old man became by sudden transfiguration Art itself, — art with all its secrets, its transports, and its dreams.

"Yes, my dear Porbus," said Frenhofer, speaking half in revery, "I have never yet beheld a perfect woman; a body whose outlines were faultless and whose flesh-tints — Ah! where lives she?" he cried, interrupting his own words; "where lives the lost Venus of the ancients, so long sought for, whose scattered beauty we snatch by glimpses? Oh! to see for a moment, a single moment, the divine completed nature, — the ideal, — I would give my all of fortune. Yes; I would search thee out, celestial Beauty! in thy farthest sphere. Like Orpheus, I would go down to hell to win back the life of art —"

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"Let us go," said Porbus to Poussin; "he neither sees nor hears us any longer."

"Let us go to his *atelier*," said the wonder-struck young man.

"Oh! the old dragon has guarded the entrance. His treasure is out of our reach. I have not waited for your wish or urging to attempt an assault on the mystery."

"Mystery! then there is a mystery?"

"Yes," answered Porbus. "Frenhofer was the only pupil Mabuse was willing to teach. He became the friend, saviour, father of that unhappy man, and he sacrificed the greater part of his wealth to satisfy the mad passions of his master. In return, Mabuse bequeathed to him the secret of relief, the power of giving life to form,—that flower of nature, our perpetual despair, which Mabuse had seized so well that once, having sold and drunk the value of a flowered damask which he should have worn at the entrance of Charles V., he made his appearance in a paper garment painted to resemble damask. The splendor of the stuff attracted the attention of the emperor, who, wishing to compliment the old drunkard, laid a hand upon his shoulder and discovered the deception. Frenhofer is a man carried away by the passion of his art; he sees above and beyond what other painters see. He has meditated deeply on color and the absolute truth of lines; but by dint of much research, much thought, much study, he has come to doubt the object for which he is searching. In his hours of despair he fancies that drawing does not exist, and that lines can render nothing but geometric figures. That, of course, is not true; because with a black line which has no color we can represent the human form. This proves that our

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art is made up, like nature, of an infinite number of elements. Drawing gives the skeleton, and color gives the life; but life without the skeleton is a far more incomplete thing than the skeleton without the life. But there is a higher truth still, — namely, that practice and observation are the essentials of a painter; and that if reason and poesy persist in wrangling with the tools, the brushes, we shall be brought to doubt, like Frenhofer, who is as much excited in brain as he is exalted in art. A sublime painter, indeed; but he had the misfortune to be born rich, and that enables him to stray into theory and conjecture. Do not imitate him. Work! work! painters should theorize with their brushes in their hands."

"We will contrive to get in," cried Poussin, not listening to Porbus, and thinking only of the hidden masterpiece.

Porbus smiled at the youth's enthusiasm, and bade him farewell with a kindly invitation to come and visit him.

Nicolas Poussin returned slowly towards the Rue de la Harpe and passed, without observing that he did so, the modest hostelry where he was lodging. Returning presently upon his steps, he ran up the miserable stairway with anxious rapidity until he reached an upper chamber nestling between the joists of a roof *en colombage*,— the plain, slight covering of the houses of old Paris. Near the single and gloomy window of the room sat a young girl, who rose quickly as the door opened, with a gesture of love; she had recognized the young man's touch upon the latch.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

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"It is -- it is," he cried, choking with joy, "that I feel myself a painter! I have doubted it till now; but to-day I believe in myself. I can be a great man. Ah, Gillette, we shall be rich, happy! There is gold in these brushes!"

Suddenly he became silent. His grave and earnest face lost its expression of joy; he was comparing the immensity of his hopes with the mediocrity of his means. The walls of the garret were covered with bits of paper on which were crayon sketches; he possessed only four clean canvases. Colors were at that time costly, and the poor gentleman gazed at a palette that was wellnigh bare. In the midst of this poverty he felt within himself an indescribable wealth of heart and the superabundant force of consuming genius. Brought to Paris by a gentleman of his acquaintance, and perhaps by the monition of his own talent, he had suddenly found a mistress,— one of those generous and noble souls who are ready to suffer by the side of a great man; espousing his poverty, studying to comprehend his caprices, strong to bear deprivation and bestow love, as others are daring in the display of luxury and in parading the insensibility of their hearts. The smile which flickered on her lips brightened as with gold the darkness of the garret and rivalled the effulgence of the skies; for the sun did not always shine in the heavens, but she was always here, — calm and collected in her passion, living in his happiness, his griefs; sustaining the genius which overflowed in love ere it found in art its destined expression.

"Listen, Gillette; come!"

The obedient, happy girl sprang lightly on the painter's knee. She was all grace and beauty, pretty as the

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spring-time, decked with the wealth of feminine charm, and lighting all with the fire of a noble soul.

"O God!" he exclaimed, "I can never tell her!"

"A secret!" she cried; "then I must know it."

Poussin was lost in thought.

"Tell me."

"Gillette, poor, beloved heart!"

"Ah! do you want something of me?"

"Yes."

"If you want me to pose as I did the other day," she said, with a little pouting air, "I will not do it. Your eyes say nothing to me, then. You look at me, but you do not think of me."

"Would you like me to copy another woman?"

"Perhaps," she answered, "if she were very ugly."

"Well," continued Poussin, in a grave tone, "if to make me a great painter it were necessary to pose to some one else —"

"You are testing me," she interrupted; "you know well that I would not do it."

Poussin bent his head upon his breast like a man succumbing to joy or grief too great for his spirit to bear.

"Listen," she said, pulling him by the sleeve of his worn doublet, "I told you, Nick, that I would give my life for you; but I never said — never! — that I, a living woman, would renounce my love."

"Renounce it?" cried Poussin.

"If I showed myself thus to another you would love me no longer; and I myself, I should feel unworthy of your love. To obey your caprices, ah, that is simple and natural! in spite of myself, I am proud and happy in doing thy dear will; but to another, fy!"

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"Forgive me, my own Gillette," said the painter, throwing himself at her feet. "I would rather be loved than famous. To me thou art more precious than fortune and honors. Yes, away with these brushes! burn those sketches! I have been mistaken. My vocation is to love thee, — thee alone! I am not a painter, I am thy lover. Perish art and all its secrets!"

She looked at him admiringly, happy and captivated by his passion. She reigned; she felt instinctively that the arts were forgotten for her sake, and flung at her feet like grains of incense.

"Yet he is only an old man," resumed Poussin. "In you he would see only a woman. You are the perfect woman whom he seeks."

"Love should grant all things!" she exclaimed, ready to sacrifice love's scruples to reward the lover who thus seemed to sacrifice his art to her. "And yet," she added, "it would be my ruin. Ah, to suffer for thy good! Yes, it is glorious! But thou wilt forget me. How came this cruel thought into thy mind?"

"It came there, and yet I love thee," he said, with a sort of contrition. "Am I, then, a wretch?"

"Let us consult Père Hardouin."

"No, no! it must be a secret between us."

"Well, I will go; but thou must not be present," she said. "Stay at the door, armed with thy dagger. If I cry out, enter and kill the man."

Forgetting all but his art, Poussin clasped her in his arms.

"He loves me no longer!" thought Gillette, when she was once more alone.

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She regretted her promise. But before long she fell a prey to an anguish far more cruel than her regret; and she struggled vainly to drive forth a terrible fear which forced its way into her mind. She felt that she loved him less as the suspicion rose in her heart that he was less worthy than she had thought him.

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II.

THREE months after the first meeting of Porbus and Poussin, the former went to see Maître Frenhofer. He found the old man a prey to one of those deep, self-developed discouragements, whose cause, if we are to believe the mathematicians of health, lies in a bad digestion, in the wind, in the weather, in some swelling of the intestines, or else, according to casuists, in the imperfections of our moral nature; the fact being that the good man was simply worn out by the effort to complete his mysterious picture. He was seated languidly in a large oaken chair of vast dimensions covered with black leather; and without changing his melancholy attitude he cast on Porbus the distant glance of a man sunk in absolute dejection.

"Well, maître," said Porbus, "was the ultra-marine, for which you journeyed to Brussels, worthless? Are you unable to grind our new white? Is the oil bad, or the brushes restive?"

"Alas!" cried the old man, "I thought for one moment that my work was accomplished; but I must have deceived myself in some of the details. I shall have no peace until I clear up my doubts. I am about to travel; I go to Turkey, Asia, Greece, in search of models. I must compare my picture with various types of Nature. It may be that I have up *there*," he added, letting a smile of satisfaction flicker on his lip, "Nature

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herself. At times I am half afraid that a breath may wake this woman, and that she will disappear from sight."

He rose suddenly, as if to depart at once. "Wait," exclaimed Porbus. "I have come in time to spare you the costs and fatigues of such a journey."

"How so?" asked Frenhofer, surprised.

"Young Poussin is beloved by a woman whose incomparable beauty is without imperfection. But, my dear master, if he consents to lend her to you, at least you must let us see your picture."

The old man remained standing, motionless, in a state bordering on stupefaction. "What!" he at last exclaimed, mournfully. "Show my creature, my spouse? — tear off the veil with which I have chastely hidden my joy? It would be prostitution! For ten years I have lived with this woman; she is mine, mine alone! she loves me! Has she not smiled upon me as, touch by touch, I painted her? She has a soul, — the soul with which I endowed her. She would blush if other eyes than mine beheld her. Let her be seen? — where is the husband, the lover, so debased as to lend his wife to dishonor? When you paint a picture for the court you do not put your whole soul into it; you sell to courtiers your tricked-out lay-figures. My painting is not a picture; it is a sentiment, a passion! Born in my *atelier*, she must remain a virgin there. She shall not leave it unclothed. Poesy and women give themselves bare, like truth, to lovers only. Have we the model of Raphael, the Angelica of Ariosto, the Beatrice of Dante? No, we see but their semblance. Well, the work which I keep hidden behind bolts and bars is an exception to

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all other art. It is not a canvas; it is a woman, — a woman with whom I weep and laugh and think and talk. Would you have me resign the joy of ten years, as I might throw away a worn-out doublet? Shall I, in a moment, cease to be father, lover, creator? — this woman is not a creature; she is my creation. Bring your young man; I will give him my treasures, — paintings of Correggio, Michel-Angelo, Titian; I will kiss the print of his feet in the dust, — but make him my rival? Shame upon me! Ha! I am more a lover than I am a painter. I shall have the strength to burn my Nut-girl ere I render my last sigh; but suffer her to endure the glance of a man, a young man, a painter? — No, no! I would kill on the morrow the man who polluted her with a look! I would kill you, — you, my friend, — if you did not worship her on your knees; and think you I would submit my idol to the cold eyes and stupid criticisms of fools? Ah, love is a mystery! its life is in the depths of the soul; it dies when a man says, even to his friend, Here is she whom I love."

The old man seemed to renew his youth; his eyes had the brilliancy and fire of life, his pale cheeks blushed a vivid red, his hands trembled. Porbus, amazed by the passionate violence with which he uttered these words, knew not how to answer a feeling so novel and yet so profound. Was the old man under the thraldom of an artist's fancy? Or did these ideas flow from the unspeakable fanaticism produced at times in every mind by the long gestation of a noble work? Was it possible to bargain with this strange and whimsical being?

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Filled with such thoughts, Porbus said to the old man, "Is it not woman for woman? Poussin lends his mistress to your eyes."

"What sort of mistress is that?" cried Frenhofer. "She will betray him sooner or later. Mine will be to me forever faithful."

"Well," returned Porbus, "then let us say no more. But before you find, even in Asia, a woman as beautiful, as perfect, as the one I speak of, you may be dead, and your picture forever unfinished."

"Oh, it is finished!" said Frenhofer. "Whoever sees it will find a woman lying on a velvet bed, beneath curtains; perfumes are exhaling from a golden tripod by her side: he will be tempted to take the tassels of the cord that holds back the curtain; he will think he sees the bosom of Catherine Lescaut, — a model called the Beautiful Nut-girl; he will see it rise and fall with the movement of her breathing. Yet — I wish I could be sure — "

"Go to Asia, then," said Porbus hastily, fancying he saw some hesitation in the old man's eye.

Porbus made a few steps towards the door of the room. At this moment Gillette and Nicolas Poussin reached the entrance of the house. As the young girl was about to enter, she dropped the arm of her lover and shrank back as if overcome by a presentiment. "What am I doing here?" she said to Poussin, in a deep voice, looking at him fixedly.

"Gillette, I leave you mistress of your actions; I will obey your will. You are my conscience, my glory. Come home; I shall be happy, perhaps, if you, yourself — "

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"Have I a self when you speak thus to me? Oh, no! I am but a child. Come," she continued, seeming to make a violent effort. "If our love perishes, if I put into my heart a long regret, thy fame shall be the guerdon of my obedience to thy will. Let us enter. I may yet live again, — a memory on thy palette."

Opening the door of the house the two lovers met Porbus coming out. Astonished at the beauty of the young girl, whose eyes were still wet with tears, he caught her all trembling by the hand and led her to the old master.

"There!" he cried; "is she not worth all the masterpieces in the world?"

Frenhofer quivered. Gillette stood before him in the ingenuous, simple attitude of a young Georgian, innocent and timid, captured by brigands and offered to a slave-merchant. A modest blush suffused her cheeks, her eyes were lowered, her hands hung at her sides, strength seemed to abandon her, and her tears protested against the violence done to her purity. Poussin cursed himself, and repented of his folly in bringing this treasure from their peaceful garret. Once more he became a lover rather than an artist; scruples convulsed his heart as he saw the eye of the old painter regain its youth and, with the artist's habit, disrobe as it were the beauteous form of the young girl. He was seized with the jealous frenzy of a true lover.

"Gillette!" he cried; "let us go."

At this cry, with its accent of love, his mistress raised her eyes joyfully and looked at him; then she ran into his arms.

"Ah! you love me still?" she whispered, bursting into tears.

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Though she had had strength to hide her suffering, she had none to hide her joy.

"Let me have her for one moment," exclaimed the old master, "and you shall compare her with my Catherine. Yes, yes; I consent!"

There was love in the cry of Frenhofer as in that of Poussin, mingled with jealous coquetry on behalf of his semblance of a woman; he seemed to revel in the triumph which the beauty of his virgin was about to win over the beauty of the living woman.

"Do not let him retract," cried Porbus, striking Poussin on the shoulder. "The fruits of love wither in a day; those of art are immortal."

"Can it be," said Gillette, looking steadily at Poussin and at Porbus, "that I am nothing more than a woman to him?"

She raised her head proudly; and as she glanced at Frenhofer with flashing eyes she saw her lover gazing once more at the picture he had formerly taken for a Giorgione.

"Ah!" she cried, "let us go in; he never looked at me like that!"

"Old man!" said Poussin, roused from his meditation by Gillette's voice, "see this sword. I will plunge it into your heart at the first cry of that young girl. I will set fire to your house, and no one shall escape from it. Do you understand me?"

His look was gloomy and the tones of his voice were terrible. His attitude, and above all the gesture with which he laid his hand upon the weapon, comforted the poor girl, who half forgave him for thus sacrificing her to his art and to his hopes of a glorious future.

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Porbus and Poussin remained outside the closed door of the *atelier*, looking at one another in silence. At first the painter of the Egyptian Mary uttered a few exclamations: "Ah, she unclothes herself!" — "He tells her to stand in the light!" — "He compares them!" but he grew silent as he watched the mournful face of the young man; for though old painters have none of such petty scruples in presence of their art, yet they admire them in others, when they are fresh and pleasing. The young man held his hand on his sword, and his ear seemed glued to the panel of the door. Both men, standing darkly in the shadow, looked like conspirators waiting the hour to strike a tyrant.

"Come in! come in!" cried the old man, beaming with happiness. "My work is perfect; I can show it now with pride. Never shall painter, brushes, colors, canvas, light, produce the rival of Catherine Lescaut, the Beautiful Nut-girl."

Porbus and Poussin, seized with wild curiosity, rushed into the middle of a vast *atelier* filled with dust, where everything lay in disorder, and where they saw a few paintings hanging here and there upon the walls. They stopped before the figure of a woman, life-sized and half nude, which filled them with eager admiration.

"Do not look at that," said Frenhofer, "it is only a daub which I made to study a pose; it is worth nothing. Those are my errors," he added, waving his hand towards the enchanting compositions on the walls around them.

At these words Porbus and Poussin, amazed at the disdain which the master showed for such marvels of art, looked about them for the secret treasure, but could see it nowhere.

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"There it is!" said the old man, whose hair fell in disorder about his face, which was scarlet with supernatural excitement. His eyes sparkled, and his breast heaved like that of a young man beside himself with love.

"Ah!" he cried, "you did not expect such perfection? You stand before a woman, and you are looking for a picture! There are such depths on that canvas, the air within it is so true, that you are unable to distinguish it from the air you breathe. Where is art? Departed, vanished! Here is the form itself of a young girl. Have I not caught the color, the very life of the line which seems to terminate the body? The same phenomenon which we notice around fishes in the water is also about objects which float in air. See how these outlines spring forth from the background. Do you not feel that you could pass your hand behind those shoulders? For seven years have I studied these effects of light coupled with form. That hair,—is it not bathed in light? Why, she breathes! That bosom, — see! Ah! who would not worship it on bended knee? The flesh palpitates! Wait, she is about to rise; wait!"

"Can you see anything?" whispered Poussin to Porbus.

"Nothing. Can you?"

"No."

The two painters drew back, leaving the old man absorbed in ecstasy, and tried to see if the light, falling plumb upon the canvas at which he pointed, had neutralized all effects. They examined the picture, moving from right to left, standing directly before it, bending, swaying, rising by turns.

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"Yes, yes; it is really a canvas," cried Frenhofer, mistaking the purpose of their examination. "See, here is the frame, the easel; these are my colors, my brushes." And he caught up a brush which he held out to them with a naïve motion.

"The old rogue is making game of us," said Poussin, coming close to the pretended picture. "I can see nothing here but a mass of confused color, crossed by a multitude of eccentric lines, making a sort of painted wall."

"We are mistaken. See!" returned Porbus.

Coming nearer, they perceived in a corner of the canvas the point of a naked foot, which came forth from the chaos of colors, tones, shadows hazy and undefined, misty and without form, — an enchanting foot, a living foot. They stood lost in admiration before this glorious fragment breaking forth from the incredible, slow, progressive destruction around it. The foot seemed to them like the torso of some Grecian Venus, brought to light amid the ruins of a burned city.

"There is a woman beneath it all!" cried Porbus, calling Poussin's attention to the layers of color which the old painter had successively laid on, believing that he thus brought his work to perfection. The two men turned towards him with one accord, beginning to comprehend, though vaguely, the ecstasy in which he lived.

"He means it in good faith," said Porbus.

"Yes, my friend," answered the old man, rousing from his abstraction, "we need faith; faith in art. We must live with our work for years before we can produce a creation like that. Some of these shadows have

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cost me endless toil. See, there on her cheek, below the eyes, a faint half-shadow; if you observed it in Nature you might think it could hardly be rendered. Well, believe me, I took unheard-of pains to reproduce that effect. My dear Porbus, look attentively at my work, and you will comprehend what I have told you about the manner of treating form and outline. Look at the light on the bosom, and see how by a series of touches and higher lights firmly laid on I have managed to grasp light itself, and combine it with the dazzling whiteness of the clearer tones; and then see how, by an opposite method, — smoothing off the sharp contrasts and the texture of the color, — I have been able, by caressing the outline of my figure and veiling it with cloudy half-tints, to do away with the very idea of drawing and all other artificial means, and give to the form the aspect and roundness of Nature itself. Come nearer, and you will see the work more distinctly; if too far off it disappears. See! there, at that point, it is, I think, most remarkable." And with the end of his brush he pointed to a spot of clear light color.

Porbus struck the old man on the shoulder, turning to Poussin as he did so, and said, "Do you know that he is one of our greatest painters?"

"He is a poet even more than he is a painter," answered Poussin gravely.

"There," returned Porbus, touching the canvas, "is the ultimate end of our art on earth."

"And from thence," added Poussin, "it rises, to enter heaven."

"How much happiness is there! — upon that canvas," said Porbus.

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The absorbed old man gave no heed to their words, he was smiling at his visionary woman.

"But sooner or later, he will perceive that there is nothing there," cried Poussin.

"Nothing there! — upon my canvas?" said Frenhofer, looking first at the two painters, and then at his imaginary picture.

"What have you done?" cried Porbus, addressing Poussin.

The old man seized the arm of the young man violently, and said to him, "You see nothing? — clown, infidel, scoundrel, dolt! Why did you come here? My good Porbus,' he added, turning to his friend, "is it possible that you, too, are jesting with me? Answer; I am your friend. Tell me, can it be that I have spoiled my picture?"

Porbus hesitated, and feared to speak; but the anxiety painted on the white face of the old man was so cruel that he was constrained to point to the canvas and utter the word, "See!"

Frenhofer looked at his picture for the space of a moment, and staggered.

"Nothing! nothing! after toiling ten years!"

He sat down and wept.

"Am I then a fool, an idiot? Have I neither talent nor capacity? Am I no better than a rich man who walks, and can only walk? Have I indeed produced nothing?"

He gazed at the canvas through tears. Suddenly he raised himself proudly and flung a lightning glance upon the two painters.

"By the blood, by the body, by the head of Christ, you are envious men who seek to make me think she is

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"On the morrow Porbus, alarmed, went again to visit Frenhofer, and found that he had died during the night, after having burned his paintings."

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spoiled, that you may steal her from me. I — I see her!" he cried. "She is wondrously beautiful!"

At this moment Poussin heard the weeping of Gillette as she stood, forgotten, in a corner.

"What troubles thee, my darling?" asked the painter, becoming once more a lover.

"Kill me!" she answered. "I should be infamous if I still loved thee, for I despise thee. I admire thee; but thou hast filled me with horror. I love, and yet already I hate thee."

While Poussin listened to Gillette, Frenhofer drew a green curtain before his Catherine, with the grave composure of a jeweller locking his drawers when he thinks that thieves are near him. He cast at the two painters a look which was profoundly dissimulating, full of contempt and suspicion; then, with convulsive haste, he silently pushed them through the door of his *atelier*. When they reached the threshold of his house he said to them, "Adieu, my little friends."

The tone of this farewell chilled the two painters with fear.

On the morrow Porbus, alarmed, went again to visit Frenhofer, and found that he had died during the night, after having burned his paintings.

THE END.

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THE COMEDY OF HUMAN LIFE

By H. DE BALZAC

PHILOSOPHICAL STUDIES

JUANA
ADIEU
A DRAMA ON THE SEASHORE
THE RED INN
THE RECRUIT
EL VERDUGO
THE ELIXIR OF LIFE
THE HATED SON
MAÎTRE CORNÉLIUS

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A DRAMA ON THE SEASHORE. "We saw, sitting on a vast granite boulder, a man who looked at us."

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JUANA.

TO MADAME LA COMTESSE MERLIN.

I.

EXPOSITION.

NOTWITHSTANDING the discipline which Maréchal Suchet had introduced into his army corps, he was unable to prevent a short period of trouble and disorder at the taking of Tarragona. According to certain fair-minded military men, this intoxication of victory bore a striking resemblance to pillage, though the maréchal promptly repressed it. Order being re-established, each regiment quartered in its respective lines, and the commandant of the city appointed, military administration began. The place assumed a mongrel aspect. Though all things were organized on a French system, the Spaniards were left free to follow *in petto* their national tastes.

This period of pillage (it is difficult to determine how long it lasted) had, like all other sublunary effects, a cause, not so difficult to discover. In the maréchal's army was a regiment, composed almost entirely of Italians and commanded by a certain

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Colonel Eugène, a man of remarkable bravery, a second Murat, who, having entered the military service too late, obtained neither a Grand Duchy of Berg nor a Kingdom of Naples, nor balls at the Pizzo. But if he won no crown he had ample opportunity to obtain wounds, and it was not surprising that he met with several. His regiment was composed of the scattered fragments of the Italian legion. This legion was to Italy what the colonial battalions are to France. Its permanent cantonments, established on the island of Elba, served as an honorable place of exile for the troublesome sons of good families and for those great men who have just missed greatness, whom society brands with a hot iron and designates by the term *mauvais sujets;* men who are for the most part misunderstood; whose existence may become either noble through the smile of a woman lifting them out of their rut, or shocking at the close of an orgy under the influence of some damnable reflection dropped by a drunken comrade.

Napoleon had incorporated these vigorous beings in the sixth of the line, hoping to metamorphose them finally into generals, — barring those whom the bullets might take off. But the emperor's calculation was scarcely fulfilled, except in the matter of the bullets. This regiment, often decimated but always the same in character, acquired a great reputation for valor in the field and for wickedness in private life. At the siege of Tarragona it lost its celebrated hero, Bianchi, the man who, during the campaign, had wagered that he would eat the heart of a Spanish sentinel, and did eat it. Though Bianchi was the prince of the devils

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incarnate to whom the regiment owed its dual reputation, he had, nevertheless, that sort of chivalrous honor which excuses, in the army, the worst excesses. In a word, he would have been, at an earlier period, an admirable pirate. A few days before his death he distinguished himself by a daring action which the maréchal wished to reward. Bianchi refused rank, pension, and additional decoration, asking, for sole recompense, the favor of being the first to mount the breach at the assault on Tarragona. The maréchal granted the request and then forgot his promise; but Bianchi forced him to remember Bianchi. The enraged hero was the first to plant our flag on the wall, where he was shot by a monk.

This historical digression was necessary, in order to explain how it was that the 6th of the line was the regiment to enter Tarragona, and why the disorder and confusion, natural enough in a city taken by storm, degenerated for a time into a slight pillage.

This regiment possessed two officers, not at all remarkable among these men of iron, who played, nevertheless, in the history we shall now relate, a somewhat important part.

The first, a captain in the quartermaster's department, an officer half civil, half military, was considered, in soldier phrase, to be fighting his own battle. He pretended bravery, boasted loudly of belonging to the 6th of the line, twirled his moustache with the air of a man who was ready to demolish everything; but his brother officers did not esteem him. The fortune he possessed made him cautious. He was nicknamed, for two reasons, "captain of crows." In the first

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place, he could smell powder a league off, and took wing at the sound of a musket; secondly, the nickname was based on an innocent military pun, which his position in the regiment warranted. Captain Montefiore, of the illustrious Montefiore family of Milan (though the laws of the Kingdom of Italy forbade him to bear his title in the French service) was one of the handsomest men in the army. This beauty may have been among the secret causes of his prudence on fighting days. A wound which might have injured his nose, cleft his forehead, or scarred his cheek, would have destroyed one of the most beautiful Italian faces which a woman ever dreamed of in all its delicate proportions. This face, not unlike the type which Girodet has given to the dying young Turk, in the "Revolt at Cairo," was instinct with that melancholy by which all women are more or less duped.

The Marquis de Montefiore possessed an entailed property, but his income was mortgaged for a number of years to pay off the costs of certain Italian escapades which are inconceivable in Paris. He had ruined himself in supporting a theatre at Milan in order to force upon the public a very inferior prima donna, whom he was said to love madly. A fine future was therefore before him, and he did not care to risk it for the paltry distinction of a bit of red ribbon. He was not a brave man, but he was certainly a philosopher; and he had precedents, if we may use so parliamentary an expression. Did not Philip the Second register a vow after the battle of Saint Quentin that never again would he put himself under fire? And did not the Duke of Alba encourage him in thinking that the worst trade in the

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world was the involuntary exchange of a crown for a bullet? Hence, Montefiore was Philippiste in his capacity of rich marquis and handsome man; and in other respects also he was quite as profound a politician as Philip the Second himself. He consoled himself for his nickname, and for the disesteem of the regiment by thinking that his comrades were blackguards, whose opinion would never be of any consequence to him if by chance they survived the present war, which seemed to be one of extermination. He relied on his face to win him promotion; he saw himself made colonel by feminine influence and a cleverly managed transition from captain of equipment to orderly officer, and from orderly officer to aide-de-camp on the staff of some easy-going marshal. By that time, he reflected, he should come into his property of a hundred thousand scudi a year, some journal would speak of him as "the brave Montefiore," he would marry a girl of rank, and no one would dare to dispute his courage or verify his wounds.

Captain Montefiore had one friend in the person of the quartermaster, — a Provençal, born in the neighborhood of Nice, whose name was Diard. A friend, whether at the galleys or in the garret of an artist, consoles for many troubles. Now Montefiore and Diard were two philosophers, who consoled each other for their present lives by the study of vice, as artists soothe the immediate disappointment of their hopes by the expectation of future fame. Both regarded the war in its results, not its action; they simply considered those who died for glory fools. Chance had made soldiers of them; whereas their natural proclivities would have seated them at the green table of a con-

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gress. Nature had poured Montefiore into the mould of a Rizzio, and Diard into that of a diplomatist. Both were endowed with that nervous, feverish, half-feminine organization, which is equally strong for good or evil, and from which may emanate, according to the impulse of these singular temperaments, a crime or a generous action, a noble deed or a base one. The fate of such natures depends at any moment on the pressure, more or less powerful, produced on their nervous systems by violent and transitory passions.

Diard was considered a good accountant, but no soldier would have trusted him with his purse or his will, possibly because of the antipathy felt by all real soldiers against the bureaucrats. The quartermaster was not without courage and a certain juvenile generosity, sentiments which many men give up as they grow older, by dint of reasoning or calculating. Variable as the beauty of a fair woman, Diard was a great boaster and a great talker, talking of everything. He said he was artistic, and he made prizes (like two celebrated generals) of works of art, solely, he declared, to preserve them for posterity. His military comrades would have been puzzled indeed to form a correct judgment of him. Many of them, accustomed to draw upon his funds when occasion obliged them, thought him rich; but in truth, he was a gambler, and gamblers may be said to have nothing of their own. Montefiore was also a gambler, and all the officers of the regiment played with the pair; for, to the shame of men be it said, it is not a rare thing to see persons gambling together around a green table who, when the game is finished, will not bow to their companions, feeling no respect for

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them. Montefiore was the man with whom Bianchi made his bet about the heart of the Spanish sentinel.

Montefiore and Diard were among the last to mount the breach at Tarragona, but the first in the heart of the town as soon as it was taken. Accidents of this sort happen in all attacks, but with this pair of friends they were customary. Supporting each other, they made their way bravely through a labyrinth of narrow and gloomy little streets in quest of their personal objects; one seeking for painted madonnas, the other for madonnas of flesh and blood.

In what part of Tarragona it happened I cannot say, but Diard presently recognized by its architecture the portal of a convent, the gate of which was already battered in. Springing into the cloister to put a stop to the fury of the soldiers, he arrived just in time to prevent two Parisians from shooting a Virgin by Albano. In spite of the moustache with which in their military fanaticism they had decorated her face, he bought the picture. Montefiore, left alone during this episode, noticed, nearly opposite to the convent, the house and shop of a draper, from which a shot was fired at him at the moment when his eyes caught a flaming glance from those of an inquisitive young girl, whose head was advanced under shelter of a blind. Tarragona taken by assault, Tarragona furious, firing from every window, Tarragona violated, with dishevelled hair, and half-naked, was indeed an object of curiosity, — the curiosity of a daring Spanish woman. It was a magnified bull-fight.

Montefiore forgot the pillage, and heard, for the moment, neither the cries, nor the musketry, nor the

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growling of the artillery. The profile of that Spanish girl was the most divinely delicious thing which he, an Italian libertine, weary of Italian beauty, and dreaming of an impossible woman because he was tired of all women, had ever seen. He could still quiver, he, who had wasted his fortune on a thousand follies, the thousand passions of a young and blasé man — the most abominable monster that society generates. An idea came into his head, suggested perhaps by the shot of the draper-patriot, namely, — to set fire to the house. But he was now alone, and without any means of action; the fighting was centred in the market-place, where a few obstinate beings were still defending the town. A better idea then occurred to him. Diard came out of the convent, but Montefiore said not a word of his discovery; on the contrary, he accompanied him on a series of rambles about the streets. But the next day, the Italian had obtained his military billet in the house of the draper, — an appropriate lodging for an equipment captain!

The house of the worthy Spaniard consisted, on the ground-floor, of a vast and gloomy shop, externally fortified with stout iron window bars, such as we see in the old storehouses of the rue des Lombards. This shop communicated with a parlor lighted from an interior courtyard, a large room breathing the very spirit of the middle-ages, with smoky old pictures, old tapestries, antique *brazero*, a plumed hat hanging to a nail, the musket of the guerrillas, and the cloak of Bartholo. The kitchen adjoined this unique living-room, where the inmates took their meals and warmed themselves over the dull glow of the brazier, smoking cigars and dis-

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coursing bitterly to animate all hearts with hatred against the French. Silver pitchers and precious dishes of plate and porcelain adorned a buttery shelf of the olden fashion. But the light, sparsely admitted, allowed these dazzling objects to show but slightly; all things, as in pictures of the Dutch school, looked brown, even the faces. Between the shop and this living-room, so fine in color and in its tone of patriarchal life, was a dark staircase leading to a ware-room where the light, carefully distributed, permitted the examination of goods. Above this were the apartments of the merchant and his wife. Rooms for an apprentice and a servant-woman were in a garret under the roof, which projected over the street and was supported by buttresses, giving a somewhat fantastic appearance to the exterior of the building. These chambers were now taken by the merchant and his wife who gave up their own rooms to the officer who was billeted upon them, — probably because they wished to avoid all quarrelling.

Montefiore gave himself out as a former Spanish subject, persecuted by Napoleon, whom he was serving against his will; and these semi-lies had the success he expected. He was invited to share the meals of the family, and was treated with the respect due to his name, his birth, and his title. He had his reasons for capturing the good-will of the merchant and his wife; he scented his madonna as the ogre scented the youthful flesh of Tom Thumb and his brothers. But in spite of the confidence he managed to inspire in the worthy pair the latter maintained the most profound silence as to the said madonna; and not only did the

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captain see no trace of the young girl during the first day he spent under the roof of the honest Spaniard, but he heard no sound and came upon no indication which revealed her presence in that ancient building. Supposing that she was the only daughter of the old couple, Montefiore concluded they had consigned her to the garret, where, for the time being, they made their home.

But no revelation came to betray the hiding-place of that precious treasure. The marquis glued his face to the lozenge-shaped leaded panes which looked upon the black-walled inclosure of the inner courtyard; but in vain; he saw no gleam of light except from the windows of the old couple, whom he could see and hear as they went and came and talked and coughed. Of the young girl, not a shadow!

Montefiore was far too wary to risk the future of his passion by exploring the house nocturnally, or by tapping softly on the doors. Discovery by that hot patriot, the mercer, suspicious as a Spaniard must be, meant ruin infallibly. The captain therefore resolved to wait patiently, resting his faith on time and the imperfection of men, which always results — even with scoundrels, and how much more with honest men! — in the neglect of precautions.

The next day he discovered a hammock in the kitchen, showing plainly where the servant-woman slept. As for the apprentice, his bed was evidently made on the shop counter. During supper on the second day Montefiore succeeded, by cursing Napoleon, in smoothing the anxious forehead of the merchant, a grave, black-visaged Spaniard, much like the

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faces formerly carved on the handles of Moorish lutes; even the wife let a gay smile of hatred appear in the folds of her elderly face. The lamp and the reflections of the brazier illumined fantastically the shadows of the noble room. The mistress of the house offered a *cigarrito* to their semi-compatriot. At this moment the rustle of a dress and the fall of a chair behind the tapestry were plainly heard.

"Ah!" cried the wife, turning pale, "may the saints assist us! God grant no harm has happened!"

"You have some one in the next room, have you not?" said Montefiore, giving no sign of emotion.

The draper dropped a word of imprecation against girls. Evidently alarmed, the wife opened a secret door, and led in, half fainting, the Italian's madonna, to whom he was careful to pay no attention; only, to avoid a too-studied indifference, he glanced at the girl before he turned to his host and said in his own language: —

"Is that your daughter, signore?"

Perez de Lagounia (such was the merchant's name) had large commercial relations with Genoa, Florence, and Livorno; he knew Italian, and replied in the same language: —

"No; if she were my daughter I should take less precautions. The child is confided to our care, and I would rather die than see any evil happen to her. But how is it possible to put sense into a girl of eighteen?"

"She is very handsome," said Montefiore, coldly, not looking at her face again.

"Her mother's beauty is celebrated," replied the merchant, briefly.

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They continued to smoke, watching each other. Though Montefiore compelled himself not to give the slightest look which might contradict his apparent coldness, he could not refrain, at a moment when Perez turned his head to expectorate, from casting a rapid glance at the young girl, whose sparkling eyes met his. Then, with that science of vision which gives to a libertine, as it does to a sculptor, the fatal power of disrobing, if we may so express it, a woman, and divining her shape by inductions both rapid and sagacious, he beheld one of those masterpieces of Nature whose creation appears to demand as its right all the happiness of love. Here was a fair young face, on which the sun of Spain had cast faint tones of bistre which added to its expression of seraphic calmness a passionate pride, like a flash of light infused beneath that diaphanous complexion, — due, perhaps, to the Moorish blood which vivified and colored it. Her hair, raised to the top of her head, fell thence with black reflections round the delicate transparent ears and defined the outlines of a blue-veined throat. These luxuriant locks brought into strong relief the dazzling eyes and the scarlet lips of a well-arched mouth. The bodice of the country set off the lines of a figure that swayed as easily as a branch of willow. She was not the Virgin of Italy, but the Virgin of Spain, of Murillo, the only artist daring enough to have painted the Mother of God intoxicated with the joy of conceiving the Christ, — the glowing imagination of the boldest and also the warmest of painters.

In this young girl three things were united, a single one of which would have sufficed for the glory of a

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woman: the purity of the pearl in the depths of ocean; the sublime exaltation of the Spanish Saint Teresa; and a passion of love which was ignorant of itself. The presence of such a woman has the virtue of a talisman. Montefiore no longer felt worn and jaded. That young girl brought back his youthful freshness.

But, though the apparition was delightful, it did not last. The girl was taken back to the secret chamber, where the servant-woman carried to her openly both light and food.

"You do right to hide her," said Montefiore in Italian. "I will keep your secret. The devil! we have generals in our army who are capable of abducting her."

Montefiore's infatuation went so far as to suggest to him the idea of marrying her. He accordingly asked her history, and Perez very willingly told him the circumstances under which she had become his ward. The prudent Spaniard was led to make this confidence because he had heard of Montefiore in Italy, and knowing his reputation was desirous to let him see how strong were the barriers which protected the young girl from the possibility of seduction. Though the goodman was gifted with a certain patriarchal eloquence, in keeping with his simple life and customs, his tale will be improved by abridgment.

At the period when the French Revolution changed the manners and morals of every country which served as the scene of its wars, a street prostitute came to Tarragona, driven from Venice at the time of its fall. The life of this woman had been a tissue of romantic adventures and strange vicissitudes. To her, oftener

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than to any other woman of her class, it had happened, thanks to the caprice of great lords struck with her extraordinary beauty, to be literally gorged with gold and jewels and all the delights of excessive wealth, — flowers, carriages, pages, maids, palaces, pictures, journeys (like those of Catherine II.); in short, the life of a queen, despotic in her caprices and obeyed, often beyond her own imaginings. Then, without herself, or any one, chemist, physician, or man of science, being able to discover how her gold evaporated, she would find herself back in the streets, poor, denuded of everything, preserving nothing but her all-powerful beauty, yet living on without thought or care of the past, the present, or the future. Cast, in her poverty, into the hands of some poor gambling officer, she attached herself to him as a dog to its master, sharing the discomforts of the military life, which indeed she comforted, as content under the roof of a garret as beneath the silken hangings of opulence. Italian and Spanish both, she fulfilled very scrupulously the duties of religion, and more than once she had said to love: —

"Return to-morrow; to-day I belong to God."

But this slime permeated with gold and perfumes, this careless indifference to all things, these unbridled passions, these religious beliefs cast into that heart like diamonds into mire, this life begun, and ended, in a hospital, these gambling chances transferred to the soul, to the very existence, — in short, this great alchemy, for which vice lit the fire beneath the crucible in which fortunes were melted up and the gold of ancestors and the honor of great names evaporated, proceeded from a *cause*, a peculiar heredity, faithfully transmitted from

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mother to daughter since the middle ages. The name of this woman was La Marana. In her family, existing solely in the female line, the idea, person, name and power of a father had been completely unknown since the thirteenth century. The name Marana was to her what the designation of Stuart is to the celebrated royal race of Scotland, a name of distinction substituted for the patronymic name by the constant heredity of the same office devolving on the family.

Formerly, in France, Spain, and Italy, when those three countries had, in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, mutual interests which united and disunited them by perpetual warfare, the name Marana served to express in its general sense, a prostitute. In those days women of that sort had a certain rank in the world of which nothing in our day can give an idea. Ninon de l'Enclos and Marian Delorme have alone played, in France, the rôle of the Imperias, Catalinas, and Maranas who, in preceding centuries, gathered around them the cassock, gown, and sword. An Imperia built I forget which church in Rome in a frenzy of repentance, as Rhodope built, in earlier times, a pyramid in Egypt. The name Marana, inflicted at first as a disgrace upon the singular family with which we are now concerned, had ended by becoming its veritable name and by ennobling its vice by incontestable antiquity.

One day, a day of opulence or of penury I know not which, for this event was a secret between herself and God, but assuredly it was in a moment of repentance and melancholy, this Marana of the nineteenth century stood with her feet in the slime and her head raised to

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heaven. She cursed the blood in her veins, she cursed herself, she trembled lest she should have a daughter, and she swore, as such women swear, on the honor and with the will of the galleys — the firmest will, the most scrupulous honor that there is on earth — she swore, before an altar, and believing in that altar, to make her daughter a virtuous creature, a saint, and thus to gain, after that long line of lost women, criminals in love, an angel in heaven for them all.

The vow once made, the blood of the Maranas spoke; the courtesan returned to her reckless life, a thought the more within her heart. At last she loved, with the violent love of such women, as Henrietta Wilson loved Lord Ponsonby, as Mademoiselle Dupuis loved Bolingbroke, as the Marchesa Pescara loved her husband — but no, she did not love, she adored one of those fair men, half women, to whom she gave the virtues which she had not, striving to keep for herself all that there was of vice between them. It was from that weak man, that senseless marriage unblessed by God or man which happiness is thought to justify, but which no happiness absolves, and for which men blush at last, that she had a daughter, a daughter to save, a daughter for whom to desire a noble life and the chastity she had not. Henceforth, happy or not happy, opulent or beggared, she had in her heart a pure, untainted sentiment, the highest of all human feelings because the most disinterested. Love has its egotism, but motherhood has none. La Marana was a mother like none other; for, in her total, her eternal shipwreck, motherhood might still redeem her. To accomplish sacredly through life the task of send-

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ing a pure soul to heaven, was not that a better thing than a tardy repentance? was it not, in truth, the only spotless prayer which she could lift to God?

So, when this daughter, when her Maria-Juana-Pepita (she would fain have given her all the saints in the calendar as guardians), when this dear little creature was granted to her, she became possessed of so high an idea of the dignity of motherhood that she entreated vice to grant her a respite. She made herself virtuous and lived in solitude. No more fêtes, no more orgies, no more love. All joys, all fortunes were centred now in the cradle of her child. The tones of that infant voice made an oasis for her soul in the burning sands of her existence. That sentiment could not be measured or estimated by any other. Did it not, in fact, comprise all human sentiments, all heavenly hopes? La Marana was so resolved not to soil her daughter with any stain other than that of birth, that she sought to invest her with social virtues; she even obliged the young father to settle a handsome patrimony upon the child and to give her his name. Thus the girl was not known as Juana Marana, but as Juana di Mancini.

Then, after seven years of joy, and kisses, and intoxicating happiness, the time came when the poor Marana deprived herself of her idol. That Juana might never bow her head under their hereditary shame, the mother had the courage to renounce her child for her child's sake, and to seek, not without horrible suffering, for another mother, another home, other principles to follow, other and saintlier examples to imitate. The abdication of a mother is either a revolting act or a sublime one; in this case, was it not sublime?

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At Tarragona a lucky accident threw the Lagounias in her way, under circumstances which enabled her to recognize the integrity of the Spaniard and the noble virtue of his wife. She came to them at a time when her proposal seemed that of a liberating angel. The fortune and honor of the merchant, momentarily compromised, required a prompt and secret succor. La Marana made over to the husband the whole sum she had obtained of the father for Juana's *dot*, requiring neither acknowledgment nor interest. According to her own code of honor, a contract, a trust, was a thing of the heart, and God its supreme judge. After stating the miseries of her position to Doña Lagounia, she confided her daughter and her daughter's fortune to the fine old Spanish honor, pure and spotless, which filled the precincts of that ancient house. Doña Lagounia had no child, and she was only too happy to obtain one to nurture. The mother then parted from her Juana, convinced that the child's future was safe, and certain of having found her a mother, a mother who would bring her up as a Mancini, and not as a Marana.

Leaving her child in the simple modest house of the merchant where the burgher virtues reigned, where religion and sacred sentiments and honor filled the air, the poor prostitute, the disinherited mother was enabled to bear her trial by visions of Juana, virgin, wife, and mother, a mother throughout her life. On the threshold of that house the Marana left a tear such as the angels garner up.

Since that day of mourning and hope the mother, drawn by some invincible presentiment, had thrice returned to see her daughter. Once when Juana fell ill with a dangerous complaint:

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"I knew it," she said to Perez when she reached the house.

Asleep, she had seen her Juana dying. She nursed her and watched her, until one morning, sure of the girl's convalescence, she kissed her, still asleep, on the forehead and left her without betraying whom she was. A second time the Marana came to the church where Juana made her first communion. Simply dressed, concealing herself behind a column, the exiled mother recognized herself in her daughter such as she once had been, pure as the snow fresh-fallen on the Alps. A courtesan even in maternity, the Marana felt in the depths of her soul a jealous sentiment, stronger for the moment than that of love, and she left the church, incapable of resisting any longer the desire to kill Doña Lagounia, as she sat there, with radiant face, too much the mother of her child. A third and last meeting had taken place between mother and daughter in the streets of Milan, to which city the merchant and his wife had paid a visit. The Marana drove through the Corso in all the splendor of a sovereign; she passed her daughter like a flash of lightning and was not recognized. Horrible anguish! To this Marana, surfeited with kisses, one was lacking, a single one, for which she would have bartered all the others: the joyous, girlish kiss of a daughter to a mother, an honored mother, a mother in whom shone all the domestic virtues. Juana living was dead to her. One thought revived the soul of the courtesan — a precious thought! Juana was henceforth safe. She might be the humblest of women, but at least she was not what her mother was — an infamous courtesan.

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The merchant and his wife had fulfilled their trust with scrupulous integrity. Juana's fortune, managed by them, had increased tenfold. Perez de Lagounia, now the richest merchant in the provinces, felt for the young girl a sentiment that was semi-superstitious. Her money had preserved his ancient house from dishonorable ruin, and the presence of so precious a creature had brought him untold prosperity. His wife, a heart of gold, and full of delicacy, had made the child religious, and as pure as she was beautiful. Juana might well become the wife of either a great seigneur or a wealthy merchant; she lacked no virtue necessary to the highest destiny. Perez had intended taking her to Madrid and marrying her to some grandee, but the events of the present war delayed the fulfilment of this project.

"I don't know where the Marana now is," said Perez, ending the above history, "but in whatever quarter of the world she may be living, when she hears of the occupation of our province by your armies, and of the siege of Tarragona, she will assuredly set out at once to come here and see to her daughter's safety."

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II.

ACTION.

THE foregoing narrative changed the intentions of the Italian captain; no longer did he think of making a Marchesa di Montefiore of Juana di Mancini. He recognized the blood of the Maranas in the glance the girl had given from behind the blinds, in the trick she had just played to satisfy her curiosity, and also in the parting look she had cast upon him. The libertine wanted a virtuous woman for a wife.

The adventure was full of danger, but danger of a kind that never daunts the least courageous man, for love and pleasure followed it. The apprentice sleeping in the shop, the cook bivouacking in the kitchen, Perez and his wife sleeping, no doubt, the wakeful sleep of the aged, the echoing sonority of the old mansion, the close surveillance of the girl in the day-time, — all these things were obstacles, and made success a thing well-nigh impossible. But Montefiore had in his favor against all impossibilities the blood of the Maranas which gushed in the heart of that inquisitive girl, Italian by birth, Spanish in principles, virgin indeed, but impatient to love. Passion, the girl, and Montefiore were ready and able to defy the whole universe.

Montefiore, impelled as much by the instinct of a man of gallantry as by those vague hopes which cannot

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be explained, and to which we give the name of presentiments (a word of astonishing verbal accuracy), Montefiore spent the first hours of the night at his window, endeavoring to look below him to the secret apartment where, undoubtedly, the merchant and his wife had hidden the love and joyfulness of their old age. The wareroom of the *entresol* separated him from the rooms on the ground-floor. The captain therefore could not have recourse to noises significantly made from one floor to the other, an artificial language which all lovers know well how to create. But chance, or it may have been the young girl herself, came to his assistance. At the moment when he stationed himself at his window, he saw, on the black wall of the courtyard, a circle of light, in the centre of which the silhouette of Juana was clearly defined; the consecutive movement of the arms, and the attitude, gave evidence that she was arranging her hair for the night.

"Is she alone?" Montefiore asked himself; "could I, without danger, lower a letter filled with coin and strike it against that circular window in her hiding-place?"

At once he wrote a note, the note of a man exiled by his family to Elba, the note of a degraded marquis now a mere captain of equipment. Then he made a cord of whatever he could find that was capable of being turned into string, filled the note with a few silver crowns, and lowered it in the deepest silence to the centre of that spherical gleam.

"The shadows will show if her mother or the servant is with her," thought Montefiore. "If she is not alone, I can pull up the string at once."

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But, after succeeding with infinite trouble in striking the glass, a single form, the lithe figure of Juana, appeared upon the wall. The young girl opened her window cautiously, saw the note, took it, and stood before the window while she read it. In it, Montefiore had given his name and asked for an interview, offering, after the style of the old romances, his heart and hand to the Signorina Juana di Mancini — a common trick, the success of which is nearly always certain. At Juana's age, nobility of soul increases the dangers which surround youth. A poet of our day has said: "Woman succumbs only to her own nobility. The lover pretends to doubt the love he inspires at the moment when he is most beloved; the young girl, confident and proud, longs to make sacrifices to prove her love, and knows the world and men too little to continue calm in the midst of her rising emotions and repel with contempt the man who accepts a life offered in expiation of a false reproach."

Ever since the constitution of societies the young girl finds herself torn by a struggle between the caution of prudent virtue and the evils of wrong-doing. Often she loses a love, delightful in prospect, and the first, if she resists; on the other hand, she loses a marriage if she is imprudent. Casting a glance over the vicissitudes of social life in Paris, it is impossible to doubt the necessity of religion; and yet Paris is situated in the forty-eighth degree of latitude, while Tarragona is in the forty-first. The old question of climates is still useful to narrators to explain the sudden denouements, the imprudences, or the resistances of love.

Montefiore kept his eyes fixed on the exquisite black

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profile projected by the gleam upon the wall. Neither he nor Juana could see each other; a troublesome cornice, vexatiously placed, deprived them of the mute correspondence which may be established between a pair of lovers as they bend to each other from their windows. Thus the mind and the attention of the captain were concentrated on that luminous circle where, without perhaps knowing it herself, the young girl would, he thought, innocently reveal her thoughts by a series of gestures. But no! The singular motions she proceeded to make gave not a particle of hope to the expectant lover. Juana was amusing herself by cutting up his missive. But virtue and innocence sometimes imitate the clever proceedings inspired by jealousy to the Bartholos of comedy. Juana, without pens, ink, or paper, was replying by snips of scissors. Presently she refastened the note to the string; the officer drew it up, opened it, and read by the light of his lamp one word, carefully cut out of the paper: *Come.*

"Come!" he said to himself; "but what of poison? or the dagger or carbine of Perez? And that apprentice not yet asleep, perhaps, in the shop? and the servant in her hammock? Besides, this old house echoes the slightest sound; I can hear old Perez snoring even here. Come, indeed! She can have nothing more to lose."

Bitter reflection! rakes alone are logical and will punish a woman for devotion. Man created Satan and Lovelace; but a virgin is an angel on whom he can bestow naught but his own vices. She is so grand, so beautiful, that he cannot magnify or embellish her; he has only the fatal power to blast her and drag her down into his own mire.

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Montefiore waited for a later and more somnolent hour of the night; then, in spite of his reflections, he descended the stairs without boots, armed with his pistols, moving step by step, stopping to question the silence, putting forth his hands, measuring the stairs, peering into the darkness, and ready at the slightest incident to fly back into his room. The Italian had put on his handsomest uniform; he had perfumed his black hair, and now shone with the particular brilliancy which dress and toilet bestow upon natural beauty. Under such circumstances most men are as feminine as a woman.

The marquis arrived without hindrance before the secret door of the room in which the girl was hidden, a sort of cell made in the angle of the house and belonging exclusively to Juana, who had remained there hidden during the day from every eye while the siege lasted. Up to the present time she had slept in the room of her adopted mother, but the limited space in the garret where the merchant and his wife had gone to make room for the officer who was billeted upon them, did not allow of her going with them. Doña Lagounia had therefore left the young girl to the guardianship of lock and key, under the protection of religious ideas, all the more efficacious because they were partly superstitious, and also under the shield of a native pride and sensitive modesty which made the young Mancini in some sort an exception among her sex. Juana possessed in an equal degree the most attaching virtues and the most passionate impulses; she had needed the modesty and sanctity of this monotonous life to calm and cool the tumultuous blood of

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the Maranas which bounded in her heart, the desires of which her adopted mother told her were an instigation of the devil.

A faint ray of light traced along the sill of the secret door guided Montefiore to the place; he scratched the panel softly and Juana opened to him. Montefiore entered, palpitating, but he recognized in the expression of the girl's face complete ignorance of her peril, a sort of naive curiosity, and an innocent admiration. He stopped short, arrested for a moment by the sacredness of the picture which met his eyes.

He saw before him a tapestry on the walls with a gray ground sprinkled with violets, a little coffer of ebony, an antique mirror, an immense and very old arm chair also in ebony and covered with tapestry, a table with twisted legs, a pretty carpet on the floor, near the table a single chair; and that was all. On the table, however, were flowers and embroidery; in a recess at the farther end of the room was the narrow little bed where Juana dreamed. Above the bed were three pictures; and near the pillow a crucifix, with a holy water basin and a prayer, printed in letters of gold and framed. Flowers exhaled their perfume faintly; the candles cast a tender light; all was calm and pure and sacred. The dreamy thoughts of Juana, but above all Juana herself, had communicated to all things her own peculiar charm; her soul appeared to shine there, like the pearl in its matrix. Juana, dressed in white, beautiful with naught but her own beauty, laying down her rosary to answer love, might have inspired respect, even in a Montefiore, if the silence, if the night, if Juana herself had not seemed so amorous.

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"Montefiore stood still, intoxicated with an unknown happiness."

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Montefiore stood still, intoxicated with an unknown happiness, possibly that of Satan beholding heaven through a rift of the clouds which form its enclosure.

"As soon as I saw you," he said in pure Tuscan, and in the modest tone of voice so peculiarly Italian, "I loved you. My soul and my life are now in you, and in you they will be forever, if you will have it so."

Juana listened, inhaling from the atmosphere the sound of these words which the accents of love made magnificent.

"Poor child! how have you breathed so long the air of this dismal house without dying of it? You, made to reign in the world, to inhabit the palace of a prince, to live in the midst of fêtes, to feel the joys which love bestows, to see the world at your feet, to efface all other beauty by your own which can have no rival — you, to live here, solitary, with those two shopkeepers!"

Adroit question! He wished to know if Juana had a lover.

"True," she replied. "But who can have told you my secret thoughts? For the last few months I have nearly died of sadness. Yes, I would *rather* die than stay longer in this house. Look at that embroidery; there is not a stitch there which I did not set with dreadful thoughts. How many times I have thought of escaping to fling myself into the sea! Why? I don't know why, — little childish troubles, but very keen, though they are so silly. Often I have kissed my mother at night as one would kiss a mother for the last time, saying in my heart: 'To-morrow I will kill myself.' But I do not die. Suicides go to hell, you know, and I am so afraid of hell that I resign myself

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to live, to get up in the morning and go to bed at night, and work the same hours, and do the same things. I am not so weary of it, but I suffer — And yet, my father and mother adore me. Oh! I am bad, I am bad; I say so to my confessor."

"Do you always live here alone, without amusement, without pleasures?"

"Oh! I have not always been like this. Till I was fifteen the festivals of the church, the chants, the music gave me pleasure. I was happy, feeling myself like the angels without sin and able to communicate every week — I loved God then. But for the last three years, from day to day, all things have changed. First, I wanted flowers here — and I have them, lovely flowers! Then I wanted — but I want nothing now," she added, after a pause, smiling at Montefiore. "Have you not said that you would love me always?"

"Yes, my Juana," cried Montefiore, softly, taking her round the waist and pressing her to his heart, "yes. But let me speak to you as you speak to God. Are you not as beautiful as Mary in heaven? Listen. I swear to you," he continued, kissing her hair, "I swear to take that forehead for my altar, to make you my idol, to lay at your feet all the luxuries of the world. For you, my palace at Milan; for you my horses, my jewels, the diamonds of my ancient family; for you, each day, fresh jewels, a thousand pleasures, and all the joys of earth!"

"Yes," she said reflectively, "I would like that; but I feel within my soul that I would like better than all the world my husband. *Mio caro sposo!*" she said, as if it were impossible to give in any other language

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the infinite tenderness, the loving elegance with which the Italian tongue and accent clothe those delightful words. Besides, Italian was Juana's maternal language.

"I should find," she continued, with a glance at Montefiore in which shone the purity of the cherubim, "I should find in *him* my dear religion, him and God — God and him. Is he to be you?" she said. "Yes, surely it will be you," she cried, after a pause. "Come, and see the picture my father brought me from Italy."

She took a candle, made a sign to Montefiore, and showed him at the foot of her bed a Saint Michael overthrowing the demon.

"Look!" she said, "has he not your eyes? When I saw you from my window in the street, our meeting seemed to me a sign from heaven. Every day during my morning meditation, while waiting for my mother to call me to prayer, I have so gazed at that picture, that angel, that I have ended by thinking him my husband — oh! heavens, I speak to you as though you were myself. I must seem crazy to you; but if you only knew how a poor captive wants to tell the thoughts that choke her! When alone, I talk to my flowers, to my tapestry; they can understand me better, I think, than my father and mother, who are so grave."

"Juana," said Montefiore, taking her hands and kissing them with the passion that gushed in his eyes, in his gestures, in the tones of his voice, "speak to me as your husband, as yourself. I have suffered all that you have suffered. Between us two few words are needed to make us comprehend our past, but there

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will never be enough to express our coming happiness. Lay your hand upon my heart. Feel how it beats. Let us promise before God, who sees and hears us, to be faithful to each other throughout our lives. Here, take my ring — and give me yours."

"Give you my ring!" she said in terror.

"Why not?" asked Montefiore, uneasy at such artlessness.

"But our holy father the Pope has blessed it; it was put upon my finger in childhood by a beautiful lady who took care of me, and who told me never to part with it."

"Juana, you cannot love me!"

"Ah!" she said, "here it is; take it. You, are you not another myself?"

She held out the ring with a trembling hand, holding it tightly as she looked at Montefiore with a clear and piercing eye that questioned him. That ring! all of herself was in it; but she gave it to him.

"Oh, my Juana!" said Montefiore, again pressing her in his arms. "I should be a monster indeed if I deceived you. I will love you forever."

Juana was thoughtful. Montefiore, reflecting that in this first interview he ought to venture upon nothing that might frighten a young girl so ignorantly pure, so imprudent by virtue rather than from desire, postponed all further action to the future, relying on his beauty, of which he knew the power, and on this innocent ring-marriage, the hymen of the heart, the lightest, yet the strongest of all ceremonies. For the rest of that night, and throughout the next day, Juana's imagination was the accomplice of her passion.

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On this first evening Montefiore forced himself to be as respectful as he was tender. With that intention, in the interests of his passion and the desires with which Juana inspired him, he was caressing and unctuous in language; he launched the young creature into plans for a new existence, described to her the world under glowing colors, talked to her of household details always attractive to the mind of girls, giving her a sense of the rights and realities of love. Then, having agreed upon the hour for their future nocturnal interviews, he left her happy, but changed; the pure and pious Juana existed no longer; in the last glance she gave him, in the pretty movement by which she brought her forehead to his lips, there was already more of passion than a girl should feel. Solitude, weariness of employments contrary to her nature had brought this about. To make the daughter of the Maranas truly virtuous, she ought to have been habituated, little by little, to the world, or else to have been wholly withdrawn from it.

"The day, to-morrow, will seem very long to me," she said, receiving his kisses on her forehead. "But stay in the salon, and speak loud, that I may hear your voice; it fills my soul."

Montefiore, clever enough to imagine the girl's life, was all the more satisfied with himself for restraining his desires because he saw that it would lead to his greater contentment. He returned to his room without accident.

Ten days went by without any event occurring to trouble the peace and solitude of the house. Montefiore employed his Italian cajolery on old Perez, on Doña

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Lagounia, on the apprentice, even on the cook, and they all liked him; but, in spite of the confidence he now inspired in them, he never asked to see Juana, or to have the door of her mysterious hiding-place opened to him. The young girl, hungry to see her lover, implored him to do so; but he always refused her from an instinct of prudence. Besides, he had used his best powers and fascinations to lull the suspicions of the old couple, and had now accustomed them to see him, a soldier, stay in bed till midday on pretence that he was ill. Thus the lovers lived only in the night-time, when the rest of the household were asleep. If Montefiore had not been one of those libertines whom the habit of gallantry enables to retain their self-possession under all circumstances, he might have been lost a dozen times during those ten days. A young lover, in the simplicity of a first love, would have committed the enchanting imprudences which are so difficult to resist. But he did resist even Juana herself, Juana pouting, Juana making her long hair a chain which she wound about his neck when caution told him he must go.

The most suspicious of guardians would however have been puzzled to detect the secret of their nightly meetings. It is to be supposed that, sure of success, the Italian marquis gave himself the ineffable pleasures of a slow seduction, step by step, leading gradually to the fire which should end the affair in a conflagration. On the eleventh day, at the dinner-table, he thought it wise to inform old Perez, under seal of secrecy, that the reason of his separation from his family was an ill-assorted marriage. This false revelation was an in.

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famous thing in view of the nocturnal drama which was being played under that roof. Montefiore, an experienced rake, was preparing for the finale of that drama which he foresaw and enjoyed as an artist who loves his art. He expected to leave before long, and without regret, the house and his love. It would happen, he thought, in this way: Juana, after waiting for him in vain for several nights, would risk her life, perhaps, in asking Perez what had become of his guest; and Perez would reply, not aware of the importance of his answer, —

"The Marquis de Montefiore is reconciled to his family, who consent to receive his wife; he has gone to Italy to present her to them."

And Juana? — The marquis never asked himself what would become of Juana; but he had studied her character, its nobility, candor, and strength, and he knew he might be sure of her silence.

He obtained a mission from one of the generals. Three days later, on the night preceding his intended departure, Montefiore, instead of returning to his own room after dinner, contrived to enter unseen that of Juana, to make that farewell night the longer. Juana, true Spaniard and true Italian, was enchanted with such boldness; it argued ardor! For herself she did not fear discovery. To find in the pure love of marriage the excitements of intrigue, to hide her husband behind the curtains of her bed, and say to her adopted father and mother, in case of detection: "I am the Marquise de Montefiore!" — was to an ignorant and romantic young girl, who for three years past had dreamed of love without dreaming of its dangers,

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delightful. The door closed on this last evening upon her folly, her happiness, like a veil, which it is useless here to raise.

It was nine o'clock; the merchant and his wife were reading their evening prayers; suddenly the noise of a carriage drawn by several horses resounded in the street; loud and hasty raps echoed from the shop where the servant hurried to open the door, and into that venerable salon rushed a woman, magnificently dressed in spite of the mud upon the wheels of her travelling-carriage, which had just crossed Italy, France, and Spain. It was, of course, the Marana, — the Marana who, in spite of her thirty-six years, was still in all the glory of her ravishing beauty; the Marana who, being at that time the mistress of a king, had left Naples, the fêtes, the skies of Naples, the climax of her life of luxury, on hearing from her royal lover of the events in Spain and the siege of Tarragona.

"Tarragona! I must get to Tarragona before the town is taken!" she cried. "Ten days to reach Tarragona!"

Then without caring for court or crown, she arrived in Tarragona, furnished with an almost imperial safe-conduct; furnished too with gold which enabled her to cross France with the velocity of a rocket.

"My daughter! my daughter!" cried the Marana.

At this voice, and this abrupt invasion of their solitude, the prayer-book fell from the hands of the old couple.

"She is there," replied the merchant, calmly, after a pause during which he recovered from the emotion caused by the abrupt entrance, and the look and voice

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of the mother. "She is there," he repeated, pointing to the door of the little chamber.

"Yes, but has any harm come to her; is she still —"

"Perfectly well," said Doña Lagounia.

"O God! send me to hell if it so pleases thee!" cried the Marana, dropping, exhausted and half dead, into a chair.

The flush in her cheeks, due to anxiety, paled suddenly; she had strength to endure suffering, but none to bear this joy. Joy was more violent in her soul than suffering, for it contained the echoes of her pain and the agonies of its own emotion.

"But," she said, "how have you kept her safe? Tarragona is taken."

"Yes," said Perez, "but since you see me living why do you ask that question? Should I not have died before harm could have come to Juana?"

At that answer, the Marana seized the calloused hand of the old man, and kissed it, wetting it with the tears that flowed from her eyes — she who never wept! those tears were all she had most precious under heaven.

"My good Perez!" she said at last. "But have you had no soldiers quartered in your house?"

"Only one," replied the Spaniard. "Fortunately for us the most loyal of men; a Spaniard by birth, but now an Italian who hates Bonaparte; a married man. He is ill, and gets up late and goes to bed early."

"An Italian! What is his name?"

"Montefiore."

"Can it be the Marquis de Montefiore —"

"Yes, Señora, he himself."

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"Has he seen Juana?"

"No," said Doña Lagounia.

"You are mistaken, wife," said Perez. "The marquis must have seen her for a moment, a short moment, it is true; but I think he looked at her that evening she came in here during supper."

"Ah, let me see my daughter!"

"Nothing easier," said Perez; "she is now asleep. If she has left the key in the lock we must waken her."

As he rose to take the duplicate key of Juana's door his eyes fell by chance on the circular gleam of light upon the black wall of the inner courtyard. Within that circle he saw the shadow of a group such as Canova alone has attempted to render. The Spaniard turned back.

"I do not know," he said to the Marana, "where to find the key."

"You are very pale," she said.

"And I will show you why," he cried, seizing his dagger and rapping its hilt violently on Juana's door as he shouted, —

"Open! open! open! Juana!"

Juana did not open, for she needed time to conceal Montefiore. She knew nothing of what was passing in the salon; the double portières of thick tapestry deadened all sounds.

"Madame, I lied to you in saying I could not find the key. Here it is," added Perez, taking it from a sideboard. "But it is useless. Juana's key is in the lock; her door is barricaded. We have been deceived, my wife!" he added, turning to Doña Lagounia. "There is a man in Juana's room."

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"Impossible! By my eternal salvation I say it is impossible!" said his wife.

"Do not swear, Doña Lagounia. Our honor is dead, and this woman —" He pointed to the Marana, who had risen and was standing motionless, blasted by his words, "this woman has the right to despise us. She saved our life, our fortune, and our honor, and we have saved nothing for her but her money — Juana!" he cried again, "open, or I will burst in your door."

His voice, rising in violence, echoed through the garrets in the roof. But he was cold and calm. The life of Monteflore was in his hands; he would wash away his remorse in the blood of that Italian.

"Out, out, out! out, all of you!" cried the Marana, springing like a tigress on the dagger, which she wrenched from the hand of the astonished Perez. "Out, Perez," she continued more calmly, "out, you and your wife and servants! There will be murder here. You might be shot by the French. Have nothing to do with this; it is my affair, mine only. Between my daughter and me there is none but God. As for the man, he belongs to *me*. The whole earth could not tear him from my grasp. Go, go! I forgive you. I see plainly that the girl is a Marana. You, your religion, your virtue were too weak to fight against my blood."

She gave a dreadful sigh, turning her dry eyes on them. She had lost all, but she knew how to suffer, — a true courtesan.

The door opened. The Marana forgot all else, and Perez, making a sign to his wife, remained at his post. With his old invincible Spanish honor he was deter

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mined to share the vengeance of the betrayed mother. Juana, all in white, and softly lighted by the wax candles, was standing calmly in the centre of her chamber.

"What do you want with me?" she said.

The Marana could not repress a passing shudder.

"Perez," she asked, "has this room another issue?"

Perez made a negative gesture; confiding in that gesture, the mother entered the room.

"Juana," she said, "I am your mother, your judge; you have placed yourself in the only situation in which I could reveal myself to you. You have come down to me, you, whom I thought in heaven. Ah! you have fallen low indeed. You have a lover in this room."

"Madame, there is and there can be no one but my husband," answered the girl. "I am the Marquise de Montefiore."

"Then there are two," said Perez, in a grave voice. "He told me he was married."

"Montefiore, my love!" cried the girl, tearing aside the curtains and revealing the officer. "Come! they are slandering you."

The Italian appeared, pale and speechless; he saw the dagger in the Marana's hand, and he knew her well. With one bound he sprang from the room, crying out in a thundering voice, —

"Help! help! they are murdering a Frenchman. Soldiers of the 6th of the line, rush for Captain Diard! Help, help!"

Perez had gripped the man and was trying to gag him with his large hand, but the Marana stopped him, saying, —

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"Bind him fast, but let him shout. Open the doors, leave them open, and go, go, as I told you; go, all of you. — As for you," she said, addressing Montefiore, "shout, call for help if you choose; by the time your soldiers get here this blade will be in your heart. Are you married? Answer."

Montefiore, who had fallen on the threshold of the door, scarcely a step from Juana, saw nothing but the blade of the dagger, the gleam of which blinded him.

"Has he deceived me?" said Juana, slowly. "He told me he was free."

"He told me that he was married," repeated Perez, in his solemn voice.

"Holy Virgin!" murmured Doña Lagounia.

"Answer, soul of corruption," said the Marana, in a low voice, bending to the ear of the marquis.

"Your daughter —" began Montefiore.

"The daughter that was mine is dead or dying," interrupted the Marana. "I have no daughter; do not utter that word. Answer, are you married?"

"No, madame," said Montefiore, at last, striving to gain time, "I desire to marry your daughter."

"My noble Montefiore!" said Juana, drawing a deep breath.

"Then why did you attempt to fly and cry for help?" asked Perez.

Terrible, revealing light!

Juana said nothing, but she wrung her hands and went to her arm-chair and sat down.

At that moment a tumult rose in the street which was plainly heard in the silence of the room. A soldier of the 6th, hearing Montefiore's cry for help, had

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summoned Diard. The quartermaster, who was fortunately in his bivouac, came, accompanied by friends.

"Why did I fly?" said Montefiore, hearing the voice of his friend. "Because I told you the truth; I am married — Diard! Diard!" he shouted in a piercing voice.

But, at a word from Perez, the apprentice closed and bolted the doors, so that the soldiers were delayed by battering them in. Before they could enter, the Marana had time to strike her dagger into the guilty man; but anger hindered her aim, the blade slipped upon the Italian's epaulet, though she struck her blow with such force that he fell at the very feet of Juana, who took no notice of him. The Marana sprang upon him, and this time, resolved not to miss her prey, she caught him by the throat.

"I am free and I will marry her! I swear it, by God, by my mother, by all there is most sacred in the world; I am a bachelor; I will marry her, on my honor!"

And he bit the arm of the courtesan.

"Mother," said Juana, "kill him. He is so base that I will not have him for my husband, were he ten times as beautiful."

"Ah! I recognize my daughter!" cried the mother.

"What is all this?" demanded the quartermaster, entering the room.

"They are murdering me," cried Montefiore, "on account of this girl; she says I am her lover. She inveigled me into a trap, and they are forcing me to marry her —"

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"And you reject her?" cried Diard, struck with the splendid beauty which contempt, hatred, and indignation had given to the girl, already so beautiful. "Then you are hard to please. If she wants a husband I am ready to marry her. Put up your weapons; there is no trouble here."

The Marana pulled the Italian to the side of her daughter's bed and said to him, in a low voice, —

"If I spare you, give thanks for the rest of your life; but, remember this, if your tongue ever injures my daughter you will see me again. Go! — How much *dot* do you give her?" she continued, going up to Perez.

"She has two hundred thousand gold piastres," replied the Spaniard.

"And that is not all, monsieur," said the Marana, turning to Diard. "Who are you? — Go!" she repeated to Montefiore.

The marquis, hearing this statement of gold piastres, came forward once more, saying, —

"I am really free —"

A glance from Juana silenced him.

"You are really free to go," she said.

And he went immediately.

"Alas! monsieur," said the girl, turning to Diard, "I thank you with admiration. But my husband is in heaven. To-morrow I shall enter a convent —"

"Juana, my Juana, hush!" cried the mother, clasping her in her arms. Then she whispered in the girl's ear. "You *must* have another husband."

Juana turned pale. She freed herself from her mother and sat down once more in her arm-chair.

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"Who are you, monsieur?" repeated the Marana, addressing Diard.

"Madame, I am at present only the quartermaster of the 6th of the line. But for such a wife I have the heart to make myself a marshal of France. My name is Pierre-François Diard. My father was provost of merchants. I am not — "

"But, at least, you are an honest man, are you not?" cried the Marana, interrupting him. "If you please the Signorina Juana di Mancini, you can marry her and be happy together. — Juana," she continued in a grave tone, "in becoming the wife of a brave and worthy man remember that you will also be a mother. I have sworn that you shall kiss your children without a blush upon your face" (her voice faltered slightly). "I have sworn that you shall live a virtuous life; expect, therefore, many troubles. But, whatever happens, continue pure, and be faithful to your husband. Sacrifice all things to him, for he will be the father of your children — the father of your children! If you take a lover, I, your mother, will stand between you and him. Do you see that dagger? It is in your *dot*," she continued, throwing the weapon on Juana's bed. "I leave it there as the guarantee of your honor so long as my eyes are open and my arm free. Farewell," she said, restraining her tears. "God grant that we may never meet again."

At that idea, her tears began to flow.

"Poor child!" she added, "you have been happier than you knew in this dull home. — Do not allow her to regret it," she said, turning to Diard.

The foregoing rapid narrative is not the principal

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subject of this Study, for the understanding of which it was necessary to explain how it happened that the quartermaster Diard married Juana di Mancini, that Montefiore and Diard were intimately known to each other, and to show plainly what blood and what passions were in Madame Diard.

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III.

THE HISTORY OF MADAME DIARD.

By the time that the quartermaster had fulfilled all the long and dilatory formalities without which no French soldier can be married, he was passionately in love with Juana di Mancini, and Juana had had time to think of her coming destiny.

An awful destiny! Juana, who felt neither esteem nor love for Diard, was bound to him forever, by a rash but necessary promise. The man was neither handsome nor well-made. His manners, devoid of all distinction, were a mixture of the worst army tone, the habits of his province, and his own insufficient education. How could she love Diard, she, a young girl all grace and elegance, born with an invincible instinct for luxury and good taste, her very nature tending toward the sphere of the higher social classes? As for esteeming him, she rejected the very thought precisely because he had married her. This repulsion was natural. Woman is a saintly and noble creature, but almost always misunderstood, and nearly always misjudged because she is misunderstood. If Juana had loved Diard she would have esteemed him. Love creates in a wife a new woman; the woman of the day before no longer exists on the morrow. Putting on the nuptial robe of a passion in which life itself is concerned, the

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woman wraps herself in purity and whiteness. Reborn into virtue and chastity, there is no past for her; she is all future, and should forget the things behind her to relearn life. In this sense the famous words which a modern poet has put into the lips of Marion Delorme is infused with truth, —

"And Love remade me virgin."

That line seems like a reminiscence of a tragedy of Corneille, so truly does it recall the energetic diction of the father of our modern theatre. Yet the poet was forced to sacrifice it to the essentially vaudevillist spirit of the pit.

So Juana loveless was doomed to be Juana humiliated, degraded, hopeless. She could not honor the man who took her thus. She felt, in all the conscientious purity of her youth, that distinction, subtle in appearance but sacredly true, legal with the heart's legality, which women apply instinctively to all their feelings, even the least reflective. Juana became profoundly sad as she saw the nature and the extent of the life before her. Often she turned her eyes, brimming with tears proudly repressed, upon Perez and Doña Lagounia, who fully comprehended, both of them, the bitter thoughts those tears contained. But they were silent: of what good were reproaches now; why look for consolations? The deeper they were, the more they enlarged the wound.

One evening, Juana, stupid with grief, heard through the open door of her little room, which the old couple had thought shut, a pitying moan from her adopted mother.

"The child will die of grief."

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"Yes," said Perez, in a shaking voice, "but what can we do? I cannot now boast of her beauty and her chastity to Comte d'Arcos, to whom I hoped to marry her."

"But a single fault is not vice," said the old woman, pitying as the angels.

"Her mother gave her to this man," said Perez.

"Yes, in a moment; without consulting the poor child!" cried Doña Lagounia.

"She knew what she was doing."

"But oh! into what hands our pearl is going!"

"Say no more, or I shall seek a quarrel with that Diard."

"And that would only lead to other miseries."

Hearing these dreadful words Juana saw the happy future she had lost by her own wrongdoing. The pure and simple years of her quiet life would have been rewarded by a brilliant existence such as she had fondly dreamed, — dreams which had caused her ruin. To fall from the height of Greatness to Monsieur Diard! She wept. At times she went nearly mad. She floated for a while between vice and religion. Vice was a speedy solution, religion a lifetime of suffering. The meditation was stormy and solemn. The next day was the fatal day, the day for the marriage. But Juana could still remain free. Free, she knew how far her misery would go; married, she was ignorant of where it went or what it might bring her.

Religion triumphed. Doña Lagounia stayed beside her child and prayed and watched as she would have prayed and watched beside the dying.

"God wills it," she said to Juana.

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Nature gives to woman alternately a strength which enables her to suffer and a weakness which leads her to resignation. Juana resigned herself; and without restriction. She determined to obey her mother's prayer, and cross the desert of life to reach God's heaven, knowing well that no flowers grew for her along the way of that painful journey.

She married Diard. As for the quartermaster, though he had no grace in Juana's eyes, we may well absolve him. He loved her distractedly. The Marana, so keen to know the signs of love, had recognized in that man the accents of passion and the brusque nature, the generous impulses, that are common to Southerners. In the paroxysm of her anger and her distress she had seen nothing but Diard's best qualities, and she thought such qualities enough for her daughter's happiness.

The first days of this marriage were apparently, happy; or, to express one of those latent facts, the miseries of which are buried by women in the depths of their souls, Juana would not cast down her husband's joy, — a double rôle, dreadful to play, but to which, sooner or later, all women unhappily married come. This is a history impossible to recount in its full truth. Juana, struggling hourly against her nature, a nature both Spanish and Italian, having dried up the source of her tears by dint of weeping, was a human type, destined to represent woman's misery in its utmost expression, namely, sorrow undyingly active; the description of which would need such minute observations that to persons eager for dramatic emotions they would seem insipid. This analysis, in which every wife would find some one of her own sufferings,

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would require a volume to express them all; a fruitless, hopeless volume by its very nature, the merit of which would consist in faintest tints and delicate shadings which critics would declare to be effeminate and diffuse. Besides, what man could rightly approach, unless he bore another heart within his heart, those solemn and touching elegies which certain women carry with them to their tomb; melancholies, misunderstood even by those who cause them; sighs unheeded, devotions unrewarded, — on earth at least, — splendid silences misconstrued; vengeances withheld, disdained; generosities perpetually bestowed and wasted; pleasures longed for and denied; angelic charities secretly accomplished, — in short. all the religions of womanhood and its inextinguishable love.

Juana knew that life; fate spared her nought. She was wholly a wife, but a sorrowful and suffering wife; a wife incessantly wounded, yet forgiving always; a wife pure as a flawless diamond, — she who had the beauty and the glow of the diamond, and in that beauty, that glow, a vengeance in her hand; for she was certainly not a woman to fear the dagger added to her *dot*.

At first, inspired by a real love, by one of those passions which for the time being change even odious characters and bring to light all that may be noble in a soul, Diard behaved like a man of honor. He forced Montefiore to leave the regiment and even the army corps, so that his wife might never meet him during the time they remained in Spain. Next, he petitioned for his own removal, and succeeded in entering the Imperial Guard. He desired at any price to obtain a title, honors, and consideration in keeping with his pres-

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ent wealth. With this idea in his mind, he behaved courageously in one of the most bloody battles in Germany, but, unfortunately, he was too severely wounded to remain in the service. Threatened with the loss of a leg, he was forced to retire on a pension, without the title of baron, without those rewards he hoped to win, and would have won had he not been Diard.

This event, this wound, and his thwarted hopes contributed to change his character. His Provençal energy, roused for a time, sank down. At first he was sustained by his wife, in whom his efforts, his courage, his ambition had induced some belief in his nature, and who showed herself, what women are, tender and consoling in the troubles of life. Inspired by a few words from Juana, the retired soldier came to Paris, resolved to win in an administrative career a position to command respect, bury in oblivion the quartermaster of the 6th of the line, and secure for Madame Diard a noble title. His passion for that seductive creature enabled him to divine her most secret wishes. Juana expressed nothing, but he understood her. He was not loved as a lover dreams of being loved; he knew this, and he strove to make himself respected, loved, and cherished. He foresaw a coming happiness, poor man, in the patience and gentleness shown on all occasions by his wife; but that patience, that gentleness, were only the outward signs of the resignation which had made her his wife. Resignation, religion, were they love? Often Diard wished for refusal where he met with chaste obedience; often he would have given his eternal life that Juana might have wept upon his bosom and not

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disguised her secret thoughts behind a smiling face which lied to him nobly. Many young men — for after a certain age men no longer struggle — persist in the effort to triumph over an evil fate, the thunder of which they hear, from time to time, on the horizon of their lives; and when at last they succumb and roll down the precipice of evil, we ought to do them justice and acknowledge these inward struggles.

Like many men Diard tried all things, and all things were hostile to him. His wealth enabled him to surround his wife with the enjoyments of Parisian luxury. She lived in a fine house, with noble rooms, where she maintained a salon, in which abounded artists (by nature no judges of men), men of pleasure ready to amuse themselves anywhere, a few politicians who swelled the numbers, and certain men of fashion, all of whom admired Juana. Those who put themselves before the eyes of the public in Paris must either conquer Paris or be subject to it. Diard's character was not sufficiently strong, compact, or persistent to command society at that epoch, because it was an epoch when all men were endeavoring to rise. Social classifications ready-made are perhaps a great boon for even the people. Napoleon has confided to us the pains he took to inspire respect in his court, where most of the courtiers had been his equals. But Napoleon was Corsican, and Diard Provençal. Given equal genius, an islander will always be more compact and rounded than the man of *terra firma* in the same latitude; the arm of the sea which separates Corsica from Provence is, in spite of human science, an ocean which has made two nations.

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Diard's mongrel position, which he himself made still more questionable, brought him great troubles. Perhaps there is useful instruction to be derived from the almost imperceptible connection of acts which led to the finale of this history.

In the first place, the sneerers of Paris did not see without malicious smiles and words the pictures with which the former quartermaster adorned his handsome mansion. Works of art purchased the night before were said to be spoils from Spain; and this accusation was the revenge of those who were jealous of his present fortune. Juana comprehended this reproach, and by her advice Diard sent back to Tarragona all the pictures he had brought from there. But the public, determined to see things in the worst light, only said, "That Diard is shrewd; he has sold his pictures." Worthy people continued to think that those which remained in the Diard salons were not honorably acquired. Some jealous women asked how it was that a *Diard* (!) had been able to marry so rich and beautiful a young girl. Hence comments and satires without end, such as Paris contributes. And yet, it must be said, that Juana met on all sides the respect inspired by her pure and religious life, which triumphed over everything, even Parisian calumny; but this respect stopped short with her, her husband received none of it. Juana's feminine perception and her keen eye hovering over her salons, brought her nothing but pain.

This lack of esteem was perfectly natural. Diard's comrades, in spite of the virtues which our imaginations attribute to soldiers, never forgave the former

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quartermaster of the 6th of the line for becoming suddenly so rich and for attempting to cut a figure in Paris. Now in Paris, from the last house in the faubourg Saint-Germain to the last house in the rue Saint-Lazare, between the heights of the Luxembourg and the heights of Montmartre, all that clothes itself and gabbles, clothes itself to go out and goes out to gabble. All that world of great and small pretensions, that world of insolence and humble desires, of envy and cringing, all that is gilded or tarnished, young or old, noble of yesterday or noble from the fourth century, all that sneers at a *parvenu*, all that fears to commit itself, all that wants to demolish power and worships power if it resists, — *all* those ears hear, *all* those tongues say, *all* those minds know, in a single evening, where the new-comer who aspires to honor among them was born and brought up, and what that interloper has done, or has not done, in the course of his life. There may be no court of assizes for the upper classes of society; but at any rate they have the most cruel of public prosecutors, an intangible moral being, both judge and executioner, who accuses and brands. Do not hope to hide anything from him; tell him all yourself; he wants to know all and he will know all. Do not ask what mysterious telegraph it was which conveyed to him in the twinkling of an eye, at any hour, in any place, that story, that bit of news, that scandal; do not ask what prompts him. That telegraph is a social mystery; no observer can report its effects. Of many extraordinary instances thereof, one may suffice: The assassination of the Duc de Berry, which occurred at the Opera-house, was related

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within ten minutes in the Île-Saint-Louis. Thus the opinion of the 6th of the line as to its quartermaster filtered through society the night on which he gave his first ball.

Diard was therefore debarred from succeeding in society. Henceforth his wife alone had the power to make anything of him. Miracle of our strange civilization! In Paris, if a man is incapable of being anything himself, his wife, when she is young and clever, may give him other chances for elevation. We sometimes meet with invalid women, feeble beings apparently, who, without rising from sofas or leaving their chambers, have ruled society, moved a thousand springs, and placed their husbands where their ambition or their vanity prompted. But Juana, whose childhood was passed in her retreat in Tarragona, knew nothing of the vices, the meannesses, or the resources of Parisian society; she looked at that society with the curiosity of a girl, but she learned from it only that which her sorrow and her wounded pride revealed to her.

Juana had the tact of a virgin heart which receives impressions in advance of the event, after the manner of what are called "sensitives." The solitary young girl, so suddenly become a woman and a wife, saw plainly that were she to attempt to compel society to respect her husband, it must be after the manner of Spanish beggars, carbine in hand. Besides, the multiplicity of the precautions she would have to take, would they meet the necessity? Suddenly she divined society as, once before, she had divined life, and she saw nothing around her but the immense extent of an

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irreparable disaster. She had, moreover, the additional grief of tardily recognizing her husband's peculiar form of incapacity; he was a man unfitted for any purpose that required continuity of ideas. He could not understand a consistent part, such as he ought to play in the world; he perceived it neither as a whole nor in its gradations, and its gradations were everything. He was in one of those positions where shrewdness and tact might have taken the place of strength; when shrewdness and tact succeed, they are, perhaps, the highest form of strength.

Now Diard, far from arresting the spot of oil on his garments left by his antecedents, did his best to spread it. Incapable of studying the phase of the empire in the midst of which he came to live in Paris, he wanted to be made prefect. At that time every one believed in the genius of Napoleon; his favor enhanced the value of all offices. Prefectures, those miniature empires, could only be filled by men of great names, or chamberlains of H. M. the emperor and king. Already the prefects were a species of vizier. The myrmidons of the great man scoffed at Diard's pretensions to a prefecture, whereupon he lowered his demand to a subprefecture. There was, of course, a ridiculous discrepancy between this latter demand and the magnitude of his fortune. To frequent the imperial salons and live with insolent luxury, and then to abandon that millionnaire life and bury himself as sub-prefect at Issoudun or Savenay was certainly holding himself below his position. Juana, too late aware of our laws and habits and administrative customs, did not enlighten her husband soon enough. Diard, desperate,

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petitioned successively all the ministerial powers; repulsed everywhere, he found nothing open to him; and society then judged him as the government judged him and as he judged himself. Diard, grievously wounded on the battlefield, was nevertheless not decorated; the quartermaster, rich as he was, was allowed no place in public life, and society logically refused him that to which he pretended in its midst.

Finally, to cap all, the luckless man felt in his own home the superiority of his wife. Though she used great tact — we might say velvet softness if the term were admissible — to disguise from her husband this supremacy, which surprised and humiliated herself, Diard ended by being affected by it.

At a game of life like this men are either unmanned, or they grow the stronger, or they give themselves to evil. The courage or the ardor of this man lessened under the reiterated blows which his own faults dealt to his self-appreciation, and fault after fault he committed. In the first place he had to struggle against his own habits and character. A passionate Provençal, frank in his vices as in his virtues, this man whose fibres vibrated like the strings of a harp, was all heart to his former friends. He succored the shabby and spattered man as readily as the needy of rank; in short, he accepted everybody, and gave his hand in his gilded salons to many a poor devil. Observing this on one occasion, a general of the empire, a variety of the human species of which no type will presently remain, refused his hand to Diard, and called him, insolently, "my good fellow" when he met him. The few persons of really good society whom Diard knew, treated him

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with that elegant, polished contempt against which a new-made man has seldom any weapons. The manners, the semi-Italian gesticulations, the speech of Diard, his style of dress, — all contributed to repulse the respect which careful observation of matters of good taste and dignity might otherwise obtain for vulgar persons; the yoke of such conventionalities can only be cast off by great and unmistakable powers. So goes the world.

These details but faintly picture the many tortures to which Juana was subjected; they came upon her one by one; each social nature pricked her with its own particular pin; and to a soul which preferred the thrust of a dagger, there could be no worse suffering than this struggle in which Diard received insults he did not feel and Juana felt those she did not receive. A moment came, an awful moment, when she gained a clear and lucid perception of society, and felt in one instant all the sorrows which were gathering themselves together to fall upon her head. She judged her husband incapable of rising to the honored ranks of the social order, and she felt that he would one day descend where his instincts led him. Henceforth Juana felt pity for him.

The future was very gloomy for this young woman. She lived in constant apprehension of some disaster. This presentiment was in her soul as a contagion is in the air, but she had strength of mind and will to disguise her anguish beneath a smile. Juana had ceased to think of herself. She used her influence to make Diard resign his various pretensions and to show him, as a haven, the peaceful and consoling life of home. Evils came from society — why not banish it? In his

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home Diard found peace and respect; he reigned there. She felt herself strong to accept the trying task of making him happy,— he, a man dissatisfied with himself. Her energy increased with the difficulties of life; she had all the secret heroism necessary to her position; religion inspired her with those desires which support the angel appointed to protect a Christian soul — occult poesy, allegorical image of our two natures!

Diard abandoned his projects, closed his house to the world, and lived in his home. But here he found another reef. The poor soldier had one of those eccentric souls which need perpetual motion. Diard was one of the men who are instinctively compelled to start again the moment that they arrive, and whose vital object seems to be to come and go incessantly, like the wheels mentioned in Holy Writ. Perhaps he felt the need of flying from himself. Without wearying of Juana, without blaming Juana, his passion for her, rendered tranquil by time, allowed his natural character to assert itself. Henceforth his days of gloom were more frequent, and he often gave way to southern excitement. The more virtuous a woman is and the more irreproachable, the more a man likes to find fault with her, if only to assert by that act his legal superiority. But if by chance she seems really imposing to him, he feels the need of foisting faults upon her. After that, between man and wife, trifles increase and grow till they swell to Alps.

But Juana, patient and without pride, gentle and without that bitterness which women know so well how to cast into their submission, left Diard no chance for planned ill-humor. Besides, she was one of those noble

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creatures to whom it is impossible to speak disrespectfully; her glance, in which her life, saintly and pure, shone out, had the weight of a fascination. Diard, embarrassed at first, then annoyed, ended by feeling that such high virtue was a yoke upon him. The goodness of his wife gave him no violent emotions, and violent emotions were what he wanted. What myriads of scenes are played in the depths of souls, beneath the cold exterior of lives that are, apparently, commonplace! Among these dramas, lasting each but a short time, though they influence life so powerfully and are frequently the forerunners of the great misfortune doomed to fall on so many marriages, it is difficult to choose an example. There was a scene, however, which particularly marked the moment when in the life of this husband and wife estrangement began. Perhaps it may also serve to explain the finale of this narrative.

Juana had two children, happily for her, two sons. The first was born seven months after her marriage. He was called Juan, and he strongly resembled his mother. The second was born about two years after her arrival in Paris. The latter resembled both Diard and Juana, but more particularly Diard. His name was Francisque. For the last five years Francisque had been the object of Juana's most tender and watchful care. The mother was constantly occupied with that child; to him her prettiest caresses; to him the toys; but to him, especially, the penetrating mother-looks. Juana had watched him from his cradle; she had studied his cries, his motions; she endeavored to discern his nature that she might educate him wisely. It seemed at times as if she had but that one child.

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Diard, seeing that the eldest, Juan, was in a way neglected, took him under his own protection; and without inquiring even of himself whether the boy was the fruit of that ephemeral love to which he owed his wife, he made him his Benjamin.

Of all the sentiments transmitted to her through the blood of her grandmothers which consumed her, Madame Diard accepted one alone, — maternal love. But she loved her children doubly: first with the noble violence of which her mother the Marana had given her the example; secondly, with grace and purity, in the spirit of those social virtues the practice of which was the glory of her life and her inward recompense. The secret thought, the conscience of her motherhood, which gave to the Marana's life its stamp of untaught poesy, was to Juana an acknowledged life, an open consolation at all hours. Her mother had been virtuous as other women are criminal, — in secret; she had stolen a fancied happiness, she had never really tasted it. But Juana, unhappy in her virtue as her mother was unhappy in her vice, could enjoy at all moments the ineffable delights which her mother had so craved and could not have. To her, as to her mother, maternity comprised all earthly sentiments. Each, from differing causes, had no other comfort in their misery. Juana's maternal love may have been the strongest because, deprived of all other affections, she put the joys she lacked into the one joy of her children; and there are noble passions that resemble vice: the more they are satisfied the more they increase. Mothers and gamblers are alike insatiable.

When Juana saw the generous pardon laid silently

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on the head of Juan by Diard's fatherly affection, she was much moved, and from the day when the husband and wife changed parts she felt for him the true and deep interest she had hitherto shown to him as a matter of duty only. If that man had been more consistent in his life; if he had not destroyed by fitful inconstancy and restlessness the forces of a true though excitable sensibility, Juana would doubtless have loved him in the end. Unfortunately, he was a type of those southern natures which are keen in perceptions they cannot follow out; capable of great things over-night, and incapable the next morning; often the victim of their own virtues, and often lucky through their worst passions; admirable men in some respects, when their good qualities are kept to steady energy by some outward bond. For two years after his retreat from active life Diard was held captive in his home by the softest chains. He lived, almost in spite of himself, under the influence of his wife, who made herself gay and amusing to cheer him, who used the resources of feminine genius to attract and seduce him to a love of virtue, but whose ability and cleverness did not go so far as to simulate love.

At this time all Paris was talking of the affair of a captain in the army who in a paroxysm of libertine jealousy had killed a woman. Diard, on coming home to dinner, told his wife that the officer was dead. He had killed himself to avoid the dishonor of a trial and the shame of death upon the scaffold. Juana did not see at first the logic of such conduct, and her husband was obliged to explain to her the fine jurisprudence of French law, which does not prosecute the dead.

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"But, papa, did n't you tell us the other day that the king could pardon?" asked Francisque.

"The king can give nothing but life," said Juan, half scornfully.

Diard and Juana, the spectators of this little scene, were differently affected by it. The glance, moist with joy, which his wife cast upon her eldest child was a fatal revelation to the husband of the secrets of a heart hitherto impenetrable. That eldest child was all Juana; Juana comprehended him; she was sure of his heart, his future; she adored him, but her ardent love was a secret between herself, her child, and God. Juan instinctively enjoyed the seeming indifference of his mother in presence of his father and brother, for she pressed him to her heart when alone. Francisque was Diard, and Juana's incessant care and watchfulness betrayed her desire to correct in the son the vices of the father and to encourage his better qualities. Juana, unaware that her glance had said too much and that her husband had rightly interpreted it, took Francisque on her lap and gave him, in a gentle voice still trembling with the pleasure that Juan's answer had brought her, a lesson upon honor, simplified to his childish intelligence.

"That boy's character requires care," said Diard.

"Yes," she replied simply.

"How about Juan?"

Madame Diard, struck by the tone in which the words were uttered, looked at her husband.

"Juan was born perfect," he added.

Then he sat down gloomily, and reflected. Presently, as his wife continued silent, he added: —

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"You love one of *your* children better than the other."

"You know that," she replied.

"No," said Diard, "I did not know until now which of them you preferred."

"But neither of them have ever given me a moment's uneasiness," she answered quickly.

"But one of them gives you greater joys," he said, more quickly still.

"I never counted them," she said.

"How false you women are!" cried Diard. "Will you dare to say that Juan is not the child of your heart?"

"If that were so," she said, with dignity, "do you think it a misfortune?"

"You have never loved me. If you had chosen, I would have conquered worlds for your sake. You know all that I have struggled to do in life, supported by the hope of pleasing you. Ah! if you had only loved me!"

"A woman who loves," said Juana, "likes to live in solitude, far from the world, and that is what we are doing."

"I know, Juana, that *you* are never in the wrong."

The words were said bitterly, and cast, for the rest of their lives together, a coldness between them.

On the morrow of that fatal day Diard went back to his old companions and found distractions for his mind in play. Unfortunately, he won much money, and continued playing. Little by little, he returned to the dissipated life he had formerly lived. Soon he ceased even to dine in his own home.

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Some months went by in the enjoyment of this new independence; he was determined to preserve it, and in order to do so he separated himself from his wife, giving her the large apartments and lodging himself in the *entresol*. By the end of the year Diard and Juana only saw each other in the morning at breakfast.

Like all gamblers, he had his alternations of loss and gain. Not wishing to cut into the capital of his fortune, he felt the necessity of withdrawing from his wife the management of their income; and the day came when he took from her all she had hitherto freely disposed of for the household benefit, giving her instead a monthly stipend. The conversation they had on this subject was the last of their married intercourse. The silence that fell between them was a true divorce; Juana comprehended that from henceforth she was only a mother, and she was glad, not seeking for the causes of this evil. For such an event is a great evil. Children are conjointly one with husband and wife in the home, and the life of her husband could not be a source of grief and injury to Juana only.

As for Diard, now emancipated, he speedily grew accustomed to win and lose enormous sums. A fine player and a heavy player, he soon became celebrated for his style of playing. The social consideration he had been unable to win under the Empire, he acquired under the Restoration by the rolling of his gold on the green cloth and by his talent for all games that were in vogue. Ambassadors, bankers, persons with newly-acquired large fortunes, and all those men who, having sucked life to the dregs, turn to gambling for its feverish joys, admired Diard at their clubs, — seldom

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in their own houses, — and they all gambled with him. He became the fashion. Two or three times during the winter he gave a fête as a matter of social pride in return for the civilities he received. At such times Juana once more caught a glimpse of the world of balls, festivities, luxury, and lights; but for her it was a sort of tax imposed upon the comfort of her solitude. She, the queen of these solemnities, appeared like a being fallen from some other planet. Her simplicity, which nothing had corrupted, her beautiful virginity of soul, which her peaceful life restored to her, her beauty and her true modesty, won her sincere homage. But observing how few women ever entered her salons, she came to understand that though her husband was following, without communicating its nature to her, a new line of conduct, he had gained nothing actually in the world's esteem.

Diard was not always lucky; far from it. In three years he had dissipated three fourths of his fortune, but his passion for play gave him the energy to continue it. He was intimate with a number of men, more particularly with the roués of the Bourse, men who, since the revolution, have set up the principle that robbery done on a large scale is only a *smirch* to the reputation, — transferring thus to financial matters the loose principles of love in the eighteenth century. Diard now became a sort of business man, and concerned himself in several of those affairs which are called *shady* in the slang of the law-courts. He practised the decent thievery by which so many men, cleverly masked, or hidden in the recesses of the political world, make their fortunes, — thievery which, if done in the streets

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by the light of an oil lamp, would send a poor devil to the galleys, but, under gilded ceilings and by the light of candelabra, is sanctioned. Diard bought up, monopolized, and sold sugars; he sold offices; he had the glory of inventing the "man of straw" for lucrative posts which it was necessary to keep in his own hands for a short time; he bought votes, receiving, on one occasion, so much per cent on the purchase of fifteen parliamentary votes which all passed on one division from the benches of the Left to the benches of the Right. Such actions are no longer crimes or thefts,—they are called governing, developing industry, becoming a financial power. Diard was placed by public opinion on the bench of infamy where many an able man was already seated. On that bench is the aristocracy of evil. It is the upper Chamber of scoundrels of high life. Diard was, therefore, not a mere commonplace gambler who is seen to be a blackguard, and ends by begging. That style of gambler is no longer seen in society of a certain topographical height. In these days bold scoundrels die brilliantly in the chariot of vice with the trappings of luxury. Diard, at least, did not buy his remorse at a low price; he made himself one of these privileged men. Having studied the machinery of government and learned all the secrets and the passions of the men in power, he was able to maintain himself in the fiery furnace into which he had sprung.

Madame Diard knew nothing of her husband's infernal life. Glad of his abandonment, she felt no curiosity about him, and all her hours were occupied. She devoted what money she had to the education of

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her children, wishing to make men of them, and giving them straight-forward reasons, without, however, taking the bloom from their young imaginations. Through them alone came her interests and her emotions; consequently, she suffered no longer from her blemished life. Her children were to her what they are to many mothers for a long period of time,— a sort of renewal of their own existence. Diard was now an accidental circumstance, not a participator in her life, and since he had ceased to be the father and the head of the family, Juana felt bound to him by no tie other than that imposed by conventional laws. Nevertheless, she brought up her children to the highest respect for paternal authority, however imaginary it was for them. In this she was greatly seconded by her husband's continual absence. If he had been much in the home Diard would have neutralized his wife's efforts. The boys had too much intelligence and shrewdness not to have judged their father; and to judge a father is moral parricide.

In the long run, however, Juana's indifference to her husband wore itself away; it even changed to a species of fear. She understood at last how the conduct of a father might long weigh on the future of her children, and her motherly solicitude brought her many, though incomplete, revelations of the truth. From day to day the dread of some unknown but inevitable evil in the shadow of which she lived became more and more keen and terrible. Therefore, during the rare moments when Diard and Juana met she would cast upon his hollow face, wan from nights of gambling and furrowed by emotions, a piercing look, the penetration of

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which made Diard shudder. At such times the assumed gayety of her husband alarmed Juana more than his gloomiest expressions of anxiety when, by chance, he forgot that assumption of joy. Diard feared his wife as a criminal fears the executioner. In him, Juana saw her children's shame; and in her Diard dreaded a calm vengeance, the judgment of that serene brow, an arm raised, a weapon ready.

After fifteen years of marriage Diard found himself without resources. He owed three hundred thousand francs and he could scarcely muster one hundred thousand. The house, his only visible possession, was mortgaged to its fullest selling value. A few days more, and the sort of prestige with which opulence had invested him would vanish. Not a hand would be offered, not a purse would be open to him. Unless some favorable event occurred he would fall into a slough of contempt, deeper perhaps than he deserved, precisely because he had mounted to a height he could not maintain. At this juncture he happened to hear that a number of strangers of distinction, diplomats and others, were assembled at the watering-places in the Pyrenees, where they gambled for enormous sums, and were doubtless well supplied with money.

He determined to go at once to the Pyrenees; but he would not leave his wife in Paris, lest some importunate creditor might reveal to her the secret of his horrible position. He therefore took her and the two children with him, refusing to allow her to take the tutor and scarcely permitting her to take a maid. His tone was curt and imperious; he seemed to have recovered some energy. This sudden journey, the cause

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of which escaped her penetration, alarmed Juana secretly. Her husband made it gayly. Obliged to occupy the same carriage, he showed himself day by day more attentive to the children and more amiable to their mother. Nevertheless, each day brought Juana dark presentiments, the presentiments of mothers who tremble without apparent reason, but who are seldom mistaken when they tremble thus. For them the veil of the future seems thinner than for others.

At Bordeaux, Diard hired in a quiet street a quiet little house, neatly furnished, and in it he established his wife. The house was at the corner of two streets, and had a garden. Joined to the neighboring house on one side only, it was open to view and accessible on the other three sides. Diard paid the rent in advance, and left Juana barely enough money for the necessary expenses of three months, a sum not exceeding a thousand francs. Madame Diard made no observation on this unusual meanness. When her husband told her that he was going to the watering-places and that she would stay at Bordeaux, Juana offered no difficulty, and at once formed a plan to teach the children Spanish and Italian, and to make them read the two masterpieces of the two languages. She was glad to lead a retired life, simply and naturally economical. To spare herself the troubles of material life, she arranged with a *traiteur* the day after Diard's departure to send in their meals. Her maid then sufficed for the service of the house, and she thus found herself without money, but her wants all provided for until her husband's return. Her pleasures consisted in taking walks with the children. She was then thirty-three

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years old. Her beauty, greatly developed, was in all its lustre. Therefore as soon as she appeared, much talk was made in Bordeaux about the beautiful Spanish stranger. At the first advances made to her Juana ceased to walk abroad, and confined herself wholly to her own large garden.

Diard at first made a fortune at the baths. In two months he won three hundred thousand dollars, but it never occurred to him to send any money to his wife; he kept it all, expecting to make some great stroke of fortune on a vast stake. Towards the end of the second month the Marquis de Montefiore appeared at the same baths. The marquis was at this time celebrated for his wealth, his handsome face, his fortunate marriage with an Englishwoman, and more especially for his love of play. Diard, his former companion, encountered him, and desired to add his spoils to those of others. A gambler with four hundred thousand francs in hand is always in a position to do as he pleases. Diard, confident in his luck, renewed acquaintance with Montefiore. The latter received him very coldly, but nevertheless they played together, and Diard lost every penny that he possessed, and more.

"My dear Montefiore," said the ex-quartermaster, after making a tour of the salon, "I owe you a hundred thousand francs; but my money is in Bordeaux, where I have left my wife."

Diard had the money in bank-bills in his pocket; but with the self-possession and rapid bird's-eye view of a man accustomed to catch at all resources, he still hoped to recover himself by some one of the endless caprices of play. Montefiore had already mentioned

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his intention of visiting Bordeaux. Had he paid his debt on the spot, Diard would have been left without the power to take his revenge; a revenge at cards often exceeds the amount of all preceding losses. But these burning expectations depended on the marquis's reply.

"Wait, my dear fellow," said Montefiore, "and we will go together to Bordeaux. In all conscience, I am rich enough to-day not to wish to take the money of an old comrade."

Three days later Diard and Montefiore were in Bordeaux at a gambling table. Diard, having won enough to pay his hundred thousand francs, went on until he had lost two hundred thousand more on his word. He was gay as a man who swam in gold. Eleven o'clock sounded; the night was superb. Montefiore may have felt, like Diard, a desire to breathe the open air and recover from such emotions in a walk. The latter proposed to the marquis to come home with him to take a cup of tea and get his money.

"But Madame Diard?" said Montefiore.

"Bah!" exclaimed the husband.

They went down-stairs; but before taking his hat Diard entered the dining-room of the establishment and asked for a glass of water. While it was being brought, he walked up and down the room, and was able, without being noticed, to pick up one of those small sharp-pointed steel knives with pearl handles which are used for cutting fruit at dessert.

"Where do you live?" said Montefiore, in the court-yard, "for I want to send a carriage there to fetch me."

Diard told him the exact address.

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"You see," said Montefiore, in a low voice, taking Diard's arm, "that as long as I am with you I have nothing to fear; but if I came home alone and a scoundrel were to follow me, I should be profitable to kill."

"Have you much with you?"

"No, not much," said the wary Italian, "only my winnings. But they would make a pretty fortune for a beggar and turn him into an honest man for the rest of his life."

Diard led the marquis along a lonely street where he remembered to have seen a house, the door of which was at the end of an avenue of trees with high and gloomy walls on either side of it. When they reached this spot he coolly invited the marquis to precede him; but as if the latter understood him he preferred to keep at his side. Then, no sooner were they fairly in the avenue, than Diard, with the agility of a tiger, tripped up the marquis with a kick behind the knees, and putting a foot on his neck stabbed him again and again to the heart till the blade of the knife broke in it. Then he searched Montefiore's pockets, took his wallet, money, everything. But though he had taken the Italian unawares, and had done the deed with lucid mind and the quickness of a pickpocket, Montefiore had time to cry "Murder! Help!" in a shrill and piercing voice which was fit to rouse every sleeper in the neighborhood. His last sighs were given in those horrible shrieks.

Diard was not aware that at the moment when they entered the avenue a crowd just issuing from a theatre was passing at the upper end of the street. The cries of the dying man reached them, though Diard did his

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best to stifle the noise by setting his foot firmly on Montefiore's neck. The crowd began to run towards the avenue, the high walls of which appeared to echo back the cries, directing them to the very spot where the crime was committed. The sound of their coming steps seemed to beat on Diard's brain. But not losing his head as yet, the murderer left the avenue and came boldly into the street, walking very gently, like a spectator who sees the inutility of trying to give help. He even turned round once or twice to judge of the distance between himself and the crowd, and he saw them rushing up the avenue, with the exception of one man, who, with a natural sense of caution, began to watch Diard.

"There he is! there he is!" cried the people, who had entered the avenue as soon as they saw Montefiore stretched out near the door of the empty house.

As soon as that clamor rose, Diard, feeling himself well in the advance, began to run or rather to fly, with the vigor of a lion and the bounds of a deer. At the other end of the street he saw, or fancied he saw, a mass of persons, and he dashed down a cross street to avoid them. But already every window was open, and heads were thrust forth right and left, while from every door came shouts and gleams of light. Diard kept on, going straight before him, through the lights and the noise; and his legs were so actively agile that he soon left the tumult behind him, though without being able to escape some eyes which took in the extent of his course more rapidly than he could cover it. Inhabitants, soldiers, gendarmes, every one, seemed afoot in the twinkling of an eye. Some men awoke

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the commissaries of police, others stayed by the body to guard it. The pursuit kept on in the direction of the fugitive, who dragged it after him like the flame of a conflagration.

Diard, as he ran, had all the sensations of a dream when he heard a whole city howling, running, panting after him. Nevertheless, he kept his ideas and his presence of mind. Presently he reached the wall of the garden of his house. The place was perfectly silent, and he thought he had foiled his pursuers, though a distant murmur of the tumult came to his ears like the roaring of the sea. He dipped some water from a brook and drank it. Then, observing a pile of stones on the road, he hid his treasure in it; obeying one of those vague thoughts which come to criminals at a moment when the faculty to judge their actions under all bearings deserts them, and they think to establish their innocence by want of proof of their guilt.

That done, he endeavored to assume a placid countenance; he even tried to smile as he rapped softly on the door of his house, hoping that no one saw him. He raised his eyes, and through the outer blinds of one window came a gleam of light from his wife's room. Then, in the midst of his trouble, visions of her gentle life, spent with her children, beat upon his brain with the force of a hammer. The maid opened the door, which Diard hastily closed behind him with a kick. For a moment he breathed freely; then, noticing that he was bathed in perspiration, he sent the servant back to Juana and stayed in the darkness of the passage, where he wiped his face with his handkerchief and put his clothes in order, like a dandy about to pay

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a visit to a pretty woman. After that he walked into a track of the moonlight to examine his hands. A quiver of joy passed over him as he saw that no blood stains were on them; the hemorrhage from his victim's body was no doubt inward.

But all this took time. When at last he mounted the stairs to Juana's room he was calm and collected, and able to reflect on his position, which resolved itself into two ideas: to leave the house, and get to the wharves. He did not *think* these ideas, he *saw* them written in fiery letters on the darkness. Once at the wharves he could hide all day, return at night for his treasure, then conceal himself, like a rat, in the hold of some vessel and escape without any one suspecting his whereabouts. But to do all this, money, gold, was his first necessity, — and he did not possess one penny.

The maid brought a light to show him up.

"Félicie," he said, "don't you hear a noise in the street, shouts, cries? Go and see what it means, and come and tell me."

His wife, in her white dressing-gown, was sitting at a table, reading aloud to Francisque and Juan from a Spanish Cervantes, while the boys followed her pronunciation of the words in the text. They all three stopped and looked at Diard, who stood in the doorway with his hands in his pockets; overcome, perhaps, by finding himself in this calm scene, so softly lighted, so beautiful with the faces of his wife and children. It was a living picture of the Virgin between her son and John.

"Juana, I have something to say to you."

"What has happened?" she asked, instantly per-

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ceiving from the livid paleness of her husband that the misfortune she had daily expected was upon them.

"Oh, nothing; but I want to speak to you — to you, alone."

And he glanced at his sons.

"My dears, go to your room, and go to bed," said Juana; "say your prayers without me."

The boys left the room in silence, with the incurious obedience of well-trained children.

"My dear Juana," said Diard, in a coaxing voice, "I left you with very little money, and I regret it now. Listen to me; since I relieved you of the care of our income by giving you an allowance, have you not, like other women, laid something by?"

"No," replied Juana, "I have nothing. In making that allowance you did not reckon the costs of the children's education. I don't say that to reproach you, my friend, only to explain my want of money. All that you gave me went to pay masters and —"

"Enough!" cried Diard, violently. "Thunder of heaven! every instant is precious! Where are your jewels?"

"You know very well I have never worn any."

"Then there 's not a sou to be had here!" cried Diard, frantically.

"Why do you shout in that way?" she asked.

"Juana," he replied, "I have killed a man."

Juana sprang to the door of her children's room and closed it; then she returned.

"Your sons must hear nothing," she said. "With whom have you fought?"

"Montefiore," he replied.

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"Ah!" she said with a sigh, "the only man you had the right to kill."

"There were many reasons why he should die by my hand. But I can't lose time — Money, money! for God's sake, money! I may be pursued. We did not fight. I — I killed him."

"Killed him!" she cried, "how?"

"Why, as one kills anything. He stole my whole fortune and I took it back, that's all. Juana, now that everything is quiet you must go down to that heap of stones — you know the heap by the garden wall — and get that money, since you have n't any in the house."

"The money that you stole?" said Juana.

"What does that matter to you? Have you any money to give me? I tell you I must get away. They are on my traces."

"Who?"

"The people, the police."

Juana left the room, but returned immediately.

"Here," she said, holding out to him at arm's length a jewel, "that is Doña Lagounia's cross. There are four rubies in it, of great value, I have been told. Take it and go — go!"

"Félicie has n't come back," he cried, with a sudden thought. "Can she have been arrested?"

Juana laid the cross on the table, and sprang to the windows that looked on the street. There she saw, in the moonlight, a file of soldiers posting themselves in deepest silence along the wall of the house. She turned, affecting to be calm, and said to her husband: —

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"You have not a minute to lose; you must escape through the garden. Here is the key of the little gate."

As a precaution she turned to the other windows, looking on the garden. In the shadow of the trees she saw the gleam of the silver lace on the hats of a body of gendarmes; and she heard the distant mutterings of a crowd of persons whom sentinels were holding back at the end of the streets up which curiosity had drawn them. Diard had, in truth, been seen to enter his house by persons at their windows, and on their information and that of the frightened maid-servant, who was arrested, the troops and the people had blocked the two streets which led to the house. A dozen gendarmes, returning from the theatre, had climbed the walls of the garden, and guarded all exit in that direction.

"Monsieur," said Juana, "you cannot escape. The whole town is here."

Diard ran from window to window with the useless activity of a captive bird striking against the panes to escape. Juana stood silent and thoughtful.

"Juana, dear Juana, help me! give me, for pity's sake, some advice."

"Yes," said Juana, "I will; and I will save you."

"Ah! you are always my good angel."

Juana left the room and returned immediately, holding out to Diard, with averted head, one of his own pistols. Diard did not take it. Juana heard the entrance of the soldiers into the courtyard, where they laid down the body of the murdered man to confront the assassin with the sight of it. She turned round

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and saw Diard white and livid. The man was nearly fainting, and tried to sit down.

"Your children implore you," she said, putting the pistol beneath his hand.

"But — my good Juana, my little Juana, do you think — Juana! is it so pressing? — I want to kiss you."

The gendarmes were mounting the staircase. Juana grasped the pistol, aimed it at Diard, holding him, in spite of his cries, by the throat; then she blew his brains out and flung the weapon on the ground.

At that instant the door was opened violently. The public prosecutor, followed by an examining judge, a doctor, a sheriff, and a posse of gendarmes, all the representatives, in short, of human justice, entered the room.

"What do you want?" asked Juana.

"Is that Monsieur Diard?" said the prosecutor, pointing to the dead body bent double on the floor.

"Yes, monsieur."

"Your gown is covered with blood, madame."

"Do you not see why?" replied Juana.

She went to the little table and sat down, taking up the volume of Cervantes; she was pale, with a nervous agitation which she nevertheless controlled, keeping it wholly inward.

"Leave the room," said the prosecutor to the gendarmes.

Then he signed to the examining judge and the doctor to remain.

"Madame, under the circumstances, we can only congratulate you on the death of your husband," he

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said. "At least he has died as a soldier should, whatever crime his passions may have led him to commit. His act renders nugatory that of justice. But however we may desire to spare you at such a moment, the law requires that we should make an exact report of all violent deaths. You will permit us to do our duty?"

"May I go and change my dress?" she asked, laying down the volume.

"Yes, madame; but you must bring it back to us. The doctor may need it."

"It would be too painful for madame to see me operate," said the doctor, understanding the suspicions of the prosecutor. "Messieurs," he added, "I hope you will allow her to remain in the next room."

The magistrates approved the request of the merciful physician, and Félicie was permitted to attend her mistress. The judge and the prosecutor talked together in a low voice. Officers of the law are very unfortunate in being forced to suspect all, and to imagine evil everywhere. By dint of supposing wicked intentions, and of comprehending them, in order to reach the truth hidden under so many contradictory actions, it is impossible that the exercise of their dreadful functions should not, in the long run, dry up at their source the generous emotions they are constrained to repress. If the sensibilities of the surgeon who probes into the mysteries of the human body end by growing callous, what becomes of those of the judge who is incessantly compelled to search the inner folds of the soul? Martyrs to their mission, magistrates are all their lives in mourning for their lost illu-

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sions; crime weighs no less heavily on them than on the criminal. An old man seated on the bench is venerable, but a young judge makes a thoughtful person shudder. The examining judge in this case was young, and he felt obliged to say to the public prosecutor, —

"Do you think that woman was her husband's accomplice? Ought we to take her into custody? Is it best to question her?"

The prosecutor replied, with a careless shrug of his shoulders, —

"Montefiore and Diard were two well-known scoundrels. The maid evidently knew nothing of the crime. Better let the thing rest there."

The doctor performed the autopsy, and dictated his report to the sheriff. Suddenly he stopped, and hastily entered the next room.

"Madame — " he said.

Juana, who had removed her bloody gown, came towards him.

"It was you," he whispered, stooping to her ear, "who killed your husband."

"Yes, monsieur," she replied.

The doctor returned and continued his dictation as follows, —

"And, from the above assemblage of facts, it appears evident that the said Diard killed himself voluntarily and by his own hand."

"Have you finished?" he said to the sheriff after a pause.

"Yes," replied the writer.

The doctor signed the report. Juana, who had fol-

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towed him into the room, gave him one glance, repressing with difficulty the tears which for an instant rose into her eyes and moistened them.

"Messieurs," she said to the public prosecutor and the judge, "I am a stranger here, and a Spaniard. I am ignorant of the laws, and I know no one in Bordeaux. I ask of you one kindness: enable me to obtain a passport for Spain."

"One moment!" cried the examining judge. "Madame, what has become of the money stolen from the Marquis de Montefiore?"

"Monsieur Diard," she replied, "said something to me vaguely about a heap of stones, under which he must have hidden it."

"Where?"

"In the street."

The two magistrates looked at each other. Juana made a noble gesture and motioned to the doctor.

"Monsieur," she said in his ear, "can I be suspected of some infamous action? I! The pile of stones must be close to the wall of my garden. Go yourself, I implore you. Look, search, find that money."

The doctor went out, taking with him the examining judge, and together they found Montefiore's treasure.

Within two days Juana had sold her cross to pay the costs of a journey. On her way with her two children to take the diligence which would carry her to the frontiers of Spain, she heard herself called in the street. Her dying mother was being carried to a hospital, and through the curtains of her litter she had seen her daughter. Juana made the bearers enter a

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TO PRINCE FREDERIC SCHWARTZENBURG.

I

AN OLD MONASTERY.

"Come, deputy of the Centre, forward! Quick step! march! if we want to be in time to dine with the others. Jump, marquis! there, that's right! why, you can skip across a stubble-field like a deer!"

These words were said by a huntsman peacefully seated at the edge of the forest of Île-Adam, who was finishing an Havana cigar while waiting for his companion, who had lost his way in the tangled underbrush of the wood. At his side four panting dogs were watching, as he did, the personage he addressed. To understand how sarcastic were these exhortations, repeated at intervals, we should state that the approaching huntsman was a stout little man whose protuberant stomach was the evidence of a truly ministerial *embonpoint*. He was struggling painfully across the furrows

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of a vast wheat-field recently harvested, the stubble of which considerably impeded him; while to add to his other miseries the sun's rays, striking obliquely on his face, collected an abundance of drops of perspiration. Absorbed in the effort to maintain his equilibrium, he leaned, now forward now back, in close imitation of the pitching of a carriage when violently jolted. The weather looked threatening. Though several spaces of blue sky still parted the thick black clouds toward the horizon, a flock of fleecy vapors were advancing with great rapidity and drawing a light gray curtain from east to west. As the wind was acting only on the upper region of the air, the atmosphere below it pressed down the hot vapors of the earth. Surrounded by masses of tall trees, the valley through which the hunter struggled felt like a furnace. Parched and silent, the forest seemed thirsty. The birds, even the insects, were voiceless; the tree-tops scarcely waved. Those persons who may still remember the summer of 1819 can imagine the woes of the poor deputy, who was struggling along, drenched in sweat, to regain his mocking friend. The latter, while smoking his cigar, had calculated from the position of the sun that it must be about five in the afternoon.

"Where the devil are we?" said the stout huntsman, mopping his forehead and leaning against the trunk of a tree nearly opposite to his companion, for he felt unequal to the effort of leaping the ditch between them.

"That 's for me to ask you," said the other, laughing, as he lay among the tall brown brake which crowned the bank. Then, throwing the end of his cigar into the ditch, he cried out vehemently: "I swear by Saint

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Hubert that never again will I trust myself in unknown regions with a statesman, though he be, like you, my dear d'Albon, a college mate."

"But, Philippe, have you forgotten your French? Or have you left your wits in Siberia?" replied the stout man, casting a sorrowfully comic look at a sign-post about a hundred feet away.

"True, true," cried Philippe, seizing his gun and springing with a bound into the field and thence to the post. "This way, d'Albon, this way," he called back to his friend, pointing to a broad paved path and reading aloud the sign: "'From Baillet to Île-Adam.' We shall certainly find the path to Cassan, which must branch from this one between here and Île-Adam."

"You are right, colonel," said Monsieur d'Albon, replacing upon his head the cap with which he had been fanning himself.

"Forward then, my respectable privy councillor," replied Colonel Philippe, whistling to the dogs, who seemed more willing to obey him than the public functionary to whom they belonged.

"Are you aware, marquis," said the jeering soldier, "that we still have six miles to go? That village over there must be Baillet."

"Good heavens!" cried the marquis, "go to Cassan if you must, but you'll go alone. I prefer to stay here, in spite of the coming storm, and wait for the horse you can send me from the château. You've played me a trick, Sucy. We were to have had a nice little hunt not far from Cassan, and beaten the coverts I know. Instead of that, you have kept me running

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like a hare since four o'clock this morning, and all I've had for breakfast is a cup of milk. Now, if you ever have a petition before the Court, I'll make you lose it, however just your claim."

The poor discouraged huntsman sat down on a stone that supported the signpost, relieved himself of his gun and his gamebag, and heaved a long sigh.

"France! such are thy deputies!" exclaimed Colonel de Sucy, laughing. "Ah! my poor d'Albon, if you had been like me six years in the wilds of Siberia —"

He said no more, but he raised his eyes to heaven as if that anguish were between himself and God.

"Come, march on!" he added. "If you sit still you are lost."

"How can I, Philippe? It is an old magisterial habit to sit still. On my honor! I'm tired out — If I had only killed a hare!"

The two men presented a rather rare contrast: the public functionary was forty-two years of age and seemed no more than thirty, whereas the soldier was thirty, and seemed forty at the least. Both wore the red rosette of the officers of the Legion of honor. A few spare locks of black hair mixed with white, like the wing of a magpie, escaped from the colonel's cap, while handsome brown curls adorned the brow of the statesman. One was tall, gaunt, high-strung, and the lines of his pallid face showed terrible passions or frightful griefs. The other had a face that was brilliant with health, and jovially worthy of an epicurean. Both were deeply sun-burned, and their high gaiters of tanned leather showed signs of the bogs and the thickets they had just come through.

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"Come," said Monsieur de Sucy, "let us get on. A short hour's march, and we shall reach Cassan in time for a good dinner."

"It is easy to see you have never loved," replied the councillor, with a look that was pitifully comic; "you are as relentless as article 304 of the penal code."

Philippe de Sucy quivered; his broad brow contracted; his face became as sombre as the skies above them. Some memory of awful bitterness distorted for a moment his features, but he said nothing. Like all strong men, he drove down his emotions to the depths of his heart; thinking perhaps, as simple characters are apt to think, that there was something immodest in unveiling griefs when human language cannot render their depths and may only rouse the mockery of those who will not comprehend them. Monsieur d'Albon had one of those delicate natures which divine sorrows, and are instantly sympathetic to the emotion they have involuntarily aroused. He respected his friend's silence, rose, forgot his fatigue, and followed him silently, grieved to have touched a wound that was evidently not healed.

"Some day, my friend," said Philippe, pressing his hand, and thanking him for his mute repentance by a heart-rending look, "I will relate to you my life. To-day I cannot."

They continued their way in silence. When the colonel's pain seemed soothed, the marquis resumed his fatigue; and with the instinct, or rather the will, of a wearied man his eye took in the very depths of the forest; he questioned the tree-tops and examined the

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branching paths, hoping to discover some dwelling where he could ask hospitality. Arriving at a cross-ways, he thought he noticed a slight smoke rising among the trees; he stopped, looked more attentively, and saw, in the midst of a vast copse, the dark-green branches of several pine-trees.

"A house! a house!" he cried, with the joy the sailor feels in crying "Land!"

Then he sprang quickly into the copse, and the colonel, who had fallen into a deep revery, followed him mechanically.

"I'd rather get an omelet, some cottage bread, and a chair here," he said, "than go to Cassan for sofas, truffles, and Bordeaux."

These words were an exclamation of enthusiasm, elicited from the councillor on catching sight of a wall, the white towers of which glimmered in the distance through the brown masses of the tree trunks.

"Ha! ha! this looks to me as if it had once been a priory," cried the marquis, as they reached a very old and blackened gate, through which they could see, in the midst of a large park, a building constructed in the style of the monasteries of old. "How those rascals the monks knew how to choose their sites!"

This last exclamation was an expression of surprise and pleasure at the poetical hermitage which met his eyes. The house stood on a slope of the mountain, at the summit of which is the village of Nerville. The great centennial oaks of the forest which encircled the dwelling made the place an absolute solitude. The main building, formerly occupied by the monks, faced south. The park seemed to have about forty acres.

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Near the house lay a succession of green meadows, charmingly crossed by several clear rivulets, with here and there a piece of water naturally placed without the least apparent artifice. Trees of elegant shape and varied foliage were distributed about. Grottos, cleverly managed, and massive terraces with dilapidated steps and rusty railings, gave a peculiar character to this lone retreat. Art had harmonized her constructions with the picturesque effects of nature. Human passions seemed to die at the feet of those great trees, which guarded this asylum from the tumult of the world as they shaded it from the fires of the sun.

"How desolate!" thought Monsieur d'Albon, observing the sombre expression which the ancient building gave to the landscape, gloomy as though a curse were on it. It seemed a fatal spot deserted by man. Ivy had stretched its tortuous muscles, covered by its rich green mantle, everywhere. Brown or green, red or yellow mosses and lichen spread their romantic tints on trees and seats and roofs and stones. The crumbling window-casings were hollowed by rain, defaced by time; the balconies were broken, the terraces demolished. Some of the cutside shutters hung from a single hinge. The rotten doors seemed quite unable to resist an assailant. Covered with shining tufts of mistletoe, the branches of the neglected fruit-trees gave no signs of fruit. Grass grew in the paths. Such ruin and desolation cast a wierd poesy on the scene, filling the souls of the spectators with dreamy thoughts. A poet would have stood there long, plunged in a melancholy revery, admiring this dis-

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order so full of harmony, this destruction which was not without its grace. Suddenly, the brown tiles shone, the mosses glittered, fantastic shadows danced upon the meadows and beneath the trees; fading colors revived; striking contrasts developed, the foliage of the trees and shrubs defined itself more clearly in the light. Then — the light went out. The landscape seemed to have spoken, and now was silent, returning to its gloom, or rather to the soft sad tones of an autumnal twilight.

"It is the palace of the Sleeping Beauty," said the marquis, beginning to view the house with the eyes of a land owner. "I wonder to whom it belongs! He must be a stupid fellow not to live in such an exquisite spot."

At that instant a woman sprang from beneath a chestnut-tree standing to the right of the gate, and, without making any noise, passed before the marquis as rapidly as the shadow of a cloud. This vision made him mute with surprise.

"Why, Albon, what is the matter?" asked the colonel.

"I am rubbing my eyes to know if I am asleep or awake," replied the marquis, with his face close to the iron rails as he tried to get another sight of the phantom.

"She must be beneath that fig-tree," he said, pointing to the foliage of a tree which rose above the wall to the left of the gate."

"She! who?"

"How can I tell?" replied Monsieur d'Albon. "A strange woman rose up there, just before me," he said

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in a low voice; "she seemed to come from the world of shades rather than the land of the living. She is so slender, so light, so filmy, she must be diaphanous. Her face was as white as milk; her eyes, her clothes, her hair jet black. She looked at me as she flitted by, and though I may say I'm no coward, that cold immovable look froze the blood in my veins."

"Is she pretty?" asked Philippe.

"I don't know. I could see nothing but the eyes in that face."

"Well, let the dinner at Cassan go to the devil!" cried the colonel. "Suppose we stay here. I have a sudden childish desire to enter that singular house. Do you see those window-frames painted red, and the red lines on the doors and shutters? Does n't the place look to you as if it belonged to the devil? — perhaps he inherited it from the monks. Come, let us pursue the black and white lady — forward, march!" cried Philippe, with forced gayety.

At that instant the two huntsmen heard a cry that was something like that of a mouse caught in a trap. They listened. The rustle of a few shrubs sounded in the silence like the murmur of a breaking wave. In vain they listened for other sounds; the earth was dumb, and kept the secret of those light steps, if, indeed, the unknown woman moved at all.

"It is very singular!" said Philippe, as they skirted the park wall.

The two friends presently reached a path in the forest which led to the village of Chauvry. After following this path some way toward the main road to Paris, they came to another iron gate which led to the

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principal façade of the mysterious dwelling. On this side the dilapidation and disorder of the premises had reached their height. Immense cracks furrowed the walls of the house, which was built on three sides of a square. Fragments of tiles and slates lying on the ground, and the dilapidated condition of the roofs, were evidence of a total want of care on the part of the owners. The fruit had fallen from the trees and lay rotting on the ground; a cow was feeding on the lawn and treading down the flowers in the borders, while a goat browsed on the shoots of the vines and munched the unripe grapes.

"Here all is harmony; the devastation seems organized," said the colonel, pulling the chain of a bell; but the bell was without a clapper.

The huntsmen heard nothing but the curiously sharp noise of a rusty spring. Though very dilapidated, a little door made in the wall beside the iron gates resisted all their efforts to open it.

"Well, well, this is getting to be exciting," said de Sucy to his companion.

"If I were not a magistrate," replied Monsieur d'Albon, "I should think that woman was a witch."

As he said the words, the cow came to the iron gate and pushed her warm muzzle towards them, as if she felt the need of seeing human beings. Then a woman, if that name could be applied to the indefinable being who suddenly issued from a clump of bushes, pulled away the cow by its rope. This woman wore on her head a red handkerchief, beneath which trailed long locks of hair in color and shape like the flax on a distaff. She wore no fichu. A coarse woollen petticoat

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in black and gray stripes, too short by several inches, exposed her legs. She might have belonged to some tribe of Red-Skins described by Cooper, for her legs, neck, and arms were the color of brick. No ray of intelligence enlivened her vacant face. A few whitish hairs served her for eyebrows; the eyes themselves, of a dull blue, were cold and wan; and her mouth was so formed as to show the teeth, which were crooked, but as white as those of a dog.

"Here, my good woman!" called Monsieur de Sucy.

She came very slowly to the gate, looking with a silly expression at the two huntsmen, the sight of whom brought a forced and painful smile to her face.

"Where are we? Whose house is this? Who are you? Do you belong here?"

To these questions and several others which the two friends alternately addressed to her, she answered only with guttural sounds that seemed more like the growl of an animal than the voice of a human being.

"She must be deaf and dumb," said the marquis.

"Bons-Hommes!" cried the peasant woman.

"Ah! I see. This is, no doubt, the old monastery of the Bons-Hommes," said the marquis.

He renewed his questions. But, like a capricious child, the peasant woman colored, played with her wooden shoe, twisted the rope of the cow, which was now feeding peaceably, and looked at the two hunters, examining every part of their clothing; then she yelped, growled, and clucked, but did not speak.

"What is your name?" said Philippe, looking at her fixedly, as if he meant to mesmerize her.

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"Geneviève," she said, laughing with a silly air.

"The cow is the most intelligent being we have seen so far," said the marquis. "I shall fire my gun and see if that will bring some one."

Just as d'Albon raised his gun, the colonel stopped him with a gesture, and pointed to the form of a woman, probably the one who had so keenly piqued his curiosity. At this moment she seemed lost in the deepest meditation, and was coming with slow steps along a distant pathway, so that the two friends had ample time to examine her.

She was dressed in a ragged gown of black satin. Her long hair fell in masses of curls over her forehead, around her shoulders, and below her waist, serving her for a shawl. Accustomed no doubt to this disorder, she seldom pushed her hair from her forehead; and when she did so, it was with a sudden toss of her head which only for a moment cleared her forehead and eyes from the thick veil. Her gesture, like that of an animal, had a remarkable mechanical precision, the quickness of which seemed wonderful in a woman. The huntsmen were amazed to see her suddenly leap up on the branch of an apple-tree, and sit there with the ease of a bird. She gathered an apple and ate it; then she dropped to the ground with the graceful ease we admire in a squirrel. Her limbs possessed an elasticity which took from every movement the slightest appearance of effort or constraint. She played upon the turf, rolling herself about like a child; then, suddenly, she flung her feet and hands forward, and lay at full length on the grass, with the grace and natural ease of a young cat asleep in the sun. Thunder sounded in

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the distance, and she turned suddenly, rising on her hands and knees with the rapidity of a dog which hears a coming footstep.

The effect of this singular attitude was to separate into two heavy masses the volume of her black hair, which now fell on either side of her head, and allowed the two spectators to admire the white shoulders glistening like daisies in a field, and the throat, the perfection of which allowed them to judge of the other beauties of her figure.

Suddenly she uttered a distressful cry and rose to her feet. Her movements succeeded each other with such airiness and grace that she seemed not a creature of this world but a daughter of the atmosphere, as sung in the poems of Ossian. She ran toward a piece of water, shook one of her legs lightly to cast off her shoe, and began to dabble her foot, white as alabaster, in the current, admiring, perhaps, the undulations she thus produced upon the surface of the water. Then she knelt down at the edge of the stream and amused herself, like a child, in casting in her long tresses and pulling them abruptly out, to watch the shower of drops that glittered down, looking, as the sunlight struck athwart them, like a chaplet of pearls.

"That woman is mad!" cried the marquis.

A hoarse cry, uttered by Geneviève, seemed uttered as a warning to the unknown woman, who turned suddenly, throwing back her hair from either side of her face. At this instant the colonel and Monsieur d'Albon could distinctly see her features; she, herself, perceiving the two friends, sprang to the iron railing with the lightness and rapidity of a deer.

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"Adieu!" she said, in a soft, harmonious voice, the melody of which did not convey the slightest feeling or the slightest thought.

Monsieur d'Albon admired the long lashes of her eyelids, the blackness of her eyebrows, and the dazzling whiteness of a skin devoid of even the faintest tinge of color. Tiny blue veins alone broke the uniformity of its pure white tones. When the marquis turned to his friend as if to share with him his amazement at the sight of this singular creature, he found him stretched on the ground as if dead. D'Albon fired his gun in the air to summon assistance, crying out "Help! help!" and then endeavored to revive the colonel. At the sound of the shot, the unknown woman, who had hitherto stood motionless, fled away with the rapidity of an arrow, uttering cries of fear like a wounded animal, and running hither and thither about the meadow with every sign of the greatest terror.

Monsieur d'Albon, hearing the rumbling of a carriage on the high-road to Île-Adam, waved his handkerchief and shouted to its occupants for assistance. The carriage was immediately driven up to the old monastery, and the marquis recognized his neighbors, Monsieur and Madame de Granville, who at once gave up their carriage to the service of the two gentlemen. Madame de Granville had with her, by chance, a bottle of salts, which revived the colonel for a moment. When he opened his eyes he turned them to the meadow, where the unknown woman was still running and uttering her distressing cries. A smothered exclamation escaped him, which seemed to express a sense of

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horror; then he closed his eyes again, and made a gesture as if to implore his friend to remove him from that sight.

Monsieur and Madame de Granville placed their carriage entirely at the disposal of the marquis, assuring him courteously that they would like to continue their way on foot.

"Who is that lady?" asked the marquis, signing toward the unknown woman.

"I believe she comes from Moulins," replied Monsieur de Granville. "She is the Comtesse de Vandières, and they say she is mad; but as she has only been here two months I will not vouch for the truth of these hearsays."

Monsieur d'Albon thanked his friends, and placing the colonel in the carriage, started with him for Cassan.

"It is she!" cried Philippe, recovering his senses.

"Who is she?" asked d'Albon.

"Stéphanie. Ah, dead and living; living and mad! I fancied I was dying."

The prudent marquis, appreciating the gravity of the crisis through which his friend was passing, was careful not to question or excite him; he was only anxious to reach the château, for the change which had taken place in the colonel's features, in fact in his whole person, made him fear for his friend's reason. As soon, therefore, as the carriage had reached the main street of Île-Adam, he dispatched the footman to the village doctor, so that the colonel was no sooner fairly in his bed at the château than the physician was beside him.

"If monsieur had not been many hours without

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food the shock would have killed him," said the doctor.

After naming the first precautions, the doctor left the room, to prepare, himself, a calming potion. The next day, Monsieur de Sucy was better, but the doctor still watched him carefully.

"I will admit to you, monsieur le marquis," he said, "that I have feared some affection of the brain. Monsieur de Sucy has received a violent shock; his passions are strong; but, in him, the first blow decides all. To-morrow he may be entirely out of danger."

The doctor was not mistaken; and the following day he allowed the marquis to see his friend.

"My dear d'Albon," said Philippe, pressing his hand, "I am going to ask a kindness of you. Go to the Bons-Hommes, and find out all you can of the lady we saw there; and return to me as quickly as you can; I shall count the minutes."

Monsieur d'Albon mounted his horse at once, and galloped to the old abbey. When he arrived there, he saw before the iron gate a tall, spare man with a very kindly face, who answered in the affirmative when asked if he lived there. Monsieur d'Albon then informed him of the reasons for his visit.

"What! monsieur," said the other, "was it you who fired that fatal shot? You very nearly killed my poor patient."

"But, monsieur, I fired in the air."

"You would have done the countess less harm had you fired at her."

"Then we must not reproach each other, monsieur, for the sight of the countess has almost killed my friend, Monsieur de Sucy."

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"Heavens! can you mean Baron Philippe de Sucy?" cried the doctor, clasping his hands. "Did he go to Russia; was he at the passage of the Bérésina?"

"Yes," replied d'Albon, "he was captured by the Cossacks and kept for five years in Siberia; he recovered his liberty a few months ago."

"Come in, monsieur," said the master of the house, leading the marquis into a room on the lower floor where everything bore the marks of capricious destruction. The silken curtains beside the windows were torn, while those of muslin remained intact.

"You see," said the tall old man, as they entered, "the ravages committed by that dear creature, to whom I devote myself. She is my niece; in spite of the impotence of my art, I hope some day to restore her reason by attempting a method which can only be employed, unfortunately, by very rich people."

Then, like all persons living in solitude who are afflicted with an ever present and ever renewed grief, he related to the marquis at great length the following narrative, which is here condensed, and relieved of the many digressions made by both the narrator and the listener.

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II.

THE PASSAGE OF THE BÉRÉSINA.

MARÉCHAL VICTOR, when he started, about nine at night, from the heights of Studzianka, which he had defended, as the rear-guard of the retreating army, during the whole day of December 28th, 1812, left a thousand men behind him, with orders to protect to the last possible moment whichever of the two bridges across the Bérésina might still exist. This rear-guard had devoted itself to the task of saving a frightful multitude of stragglers overcome by the cold, who obstinately refused to leave the bivouacs of the army. The heroism of this generous troop proved useless. The stragglers who flocked in masses to the banks of the Bérésina found there, unhappily, an immense number of carriages, caissons, and articles of all kinds which the army had been forced to abandon when effecting its passage of the river on the 27th and 28th of November. Heirs to such unlooked-for riches, the unfortunate men, stupid with cold, took up their abode in the deserted bivouacs, broke up the material which they found there to build themselves cabins, made fuel of everything that came to hand, cut up the frozen carcasses of the horses for food, tore the cloth and the curtains from the carriages for coverlets, and went to sleep, instead of continuing their way and crossing quietly

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during the night that cruel Bérésina, which an incredible fatality had already made so destructive to the army.

The apathy of these poor soldiers can only be conceived by those who remember to have crossed vast deserts of snow without other perspective than a snow horizon, without other drink than snow, without other bed than snow, without other food than snow or a few frozen beet-roots, a few handfuls of flour, or a little horseflesh. Dying of hunger, thirst, fatigue, and want of sleep, these unfortunates reached a shore where they saw before them wood, provisions, innumerable camp equipages, and carriages, — in short a whole town at their service. The village of Studzianka had been wholly taken to pieces and conveyed from the heights on which it stood to the plain. However forlorn and dangerous that refuge might be, its miseries and its perils only courted men who had lately seen nothing before them but the awful deserts of Russia. It was, in fact, a vast asylum which had an existence of twenty-four hours only.

Utter lassitude, and the sense of unexpected comfort, made that mass of men inaccessible to every thought but that of rest. Though the artillery of the left wing of the Russians kept up a steady fire on this mass, — visible like a stain now black, now flaming, in the midst of the trackless snow, — this shot and shell seemed to the torpid creatures only one inconvenience the more. It was like a thunderstorm, despised by all because the lightning strikes so few; the balls struck only, here and there, the dying, the sick, the dead sometimes! Stragglers arrived in groups continually; but once here those perambulating corpses separated; each begged

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for himself a place near a fire; repulsed repeatedly, they met again, to obtain by force the hospitality already refused to them. Deaf to the voice of some of their officers, who warned them of probable destruction on the morrow, they spent the amount of courage necessary to cross the river in building that asylum of a night, in making one meal that they themselves doomed to be their last. The death that awaited them they considered no evil, provided they could have that one night's sleep. They thought nothing evil but hunger, thirst, and cold. When there was no more wood or food or fire, horrible struggles took place between fresh-comers and the rich who possessed a shelter. The weakest succumbed.

At last there came a moment when a number, pursued by the Russians, found only snow on which to bivouac, and these lay down to rise no more. Insensibly this mass of almost annihilated beings became so compact, so deaf, so torpid, so happy perhaps, that Maréchal Victor, who had been their heroic defender by holding twenty thousand Russians under Wittgenstein at bay, was forced to open a passage by main force through this forest of men in order to cross the Bérésina with the five thousand gallant fellows whom he was taking to the emperor. The unfortunate malingerers allowed themselves to be crushed rather than stir; they perished in silence, smiling at their extinguished fires, without a thought of France.

It was not until ten o'clock that night that Maréchal Victor reached the bank of the river. Before crossing the bridge which led to Zembin, he confided the fate of his own rear-guard now left in Studzianka to Éblé, the

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savior of all those who survived the calamities of the Bérésina. It was towards midnight when this great general, followed by one brave officer, left the cabin he occupied near the bridge, and studied the spectacle of that improvised camp placed between the bank of the river and Studzianka. The Russian cannon had ceased to thunder. Innumerable fires, which, amid that trackless waste of snow, burned pale and scarcely sent out any gleams, illumined here and there by sudden flashes forms and faces that were barely human. Thirty thousand poor wretches, belonging to all nations, from whom Napoleon had recruited his Russian army, were trifling away their lives with brutish indifference.

"Let us save them!" said General Éblé to the officer who accompanied him. "To-morrow morning the Russians will be masters of Studzianka. We must burn the bridge the moment they appear. Therefore, my friend, take your courage in your hand! Go to the heights. Tell General Fournier he has barely time to evacuate his position, force a way through this crowd, and cross the bridge. When you have seen him in motion follow him. Find men you can trust, and the moment Fournier has crossed the bridge, burn, without pity, huts, equipages, caissons, carriages, — *everything!* Drive that mass of men to the bridge. Compel all that has two legs to get to the other side of the river. The burning of everything — *everything* — is now our last resource. If Berthier had let me destroy those damned camp equipages, this river would swallow only my poor pontoniers, those fifty heroes who will save the army, but who themselves will be forgotten."

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The general laid his hand on his forehead and was silent. He felt that Poland would be his grave, and that no voice would rise to do justice to those noble men who stood in the water, the icy water of the Bérésina, to destroy the buttresses of the bridges. One alone of those heroes still lives — or, to speak more correctly, suffers — in a village, totally ignored.

The aide-de-camp started. Hardly had this generous officer gone a hundred yards towards Studzianka than General Éblé wakened a number of his weary pontoniers, and began the work, — the charitable work of burning the bivouacs set up about the bridge, and forcing the sleepers, thus dislodged, to cross the river.

Meanwhile the young aide-de-camp reached, not without difficulty, the only wooden house still left standing in Studzianka.

"This barrack seems pretty full, comrade," he said to a man whom he saw by the doorway.

"If you can get in you 'll be a clever trooper," replied the officer, without turning his head or ceasing to slice off with his sabre the bark of the logs of which the house was built.

"Is that you, Philippe?" said the aide-de-camp, recognizing a friend by the tones of his voice.

"Yes. Ha, ha! is it you, old fellow?" replied Monsieur de Sucy, looking at the aide-de-camp, who, like himself, was only twenty-three years of age. "I thought you were the other side of that cursed river. What are you here for? Have you brought cakes and wine for our dessert? You 'll be welcome," and he went on slicing off the bark, which he gave as a sort of provender to his horse.

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"I am looking for your commander to tell him, from General Éblé, to make for Zembin. You 'll have barely time to get through that crowd of men below. I am going presently to set fire to their camp and force them to march."

"You warm me up — almost! That news makes me perspire. I have two friends I *must* save. Ah! without those two to cling to me, I should be dead already. It is for them that I feed my horse and don't eat myself. Have you any food, — a mere crust? It is thirty hours since anything has gone into my stomach, and yet I have fought like a madman — just to keep a little warmth and courage in me."

"Poor Philippe, I have nothing — nothing! But where 's your general, — in this house?"

"No, don't go there; the place is full of wounded. Go up the street; you 'll find on your left a sort of pig-pen; the general is there. Good-bye, old fellow. If we ever dance a trenis on a Paris floor — "

He did not end his sentence; the north wind blew at that moment with such ferocity that the aide-de-camp hurried on to escape being frozen, and the lips of Major de Sucy stiffened. Silence reigned, broken only by the moans which came from the house, and the dull sound made by the major's horse as it chewed in a fury of hunger the icy bark of the trees with which the house was built. Monsieur de Sucy replaced his sabre in its scabbard, took the bridle of the precious horse he had hitherto been able to preserve, and led it, in spite of the animal's resistance, from the wretched fodder it appeared to think excellent.

"We 'll start, Bichette, we 'll start! There 's none

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but you, my beauty, who can save Stéphanie. Ha! by and bye you and I may be able to rest — and die," he added.

Philippe, wrapped in a fur pelisse, to which he owed his preservation and his energy, began to run, striking his feet hard upon the frozen snow to keep them warm. Scarcely had he gone a few hundred yards from the village than he saw a blaze in the direction of the place where, since morning, he had left his carriage in charge of his former orderly, an old soldier. Horrible anxiety laid hold of him. Like all others who were controlled during this fatal retreat by some powerful sentiment, he found a strength to save his friends which he could not have put forth to save himself.

Presently he reached a slight declivity at the foot of which, in a spot sheltered from the enemy's balls, he had stationed the carriage, containing a young woman, the companion of his childhood, the being most dear to him on earth. At a few steps distant from the vehicle he now found a company of some thirty stragglers collected around an immense fire, which they were feeding with planks, caisson covers, wheels, and broken carriages. These soldiers were, no doubt, the last comers of that crowd who, from the base of the hill of Studzianka to the fatal river, formed an ocean of heads intermingled with fires and huts, — a living sea, swayed by motions that were almost imperceptible, and giving forth a murmuring sound that rose at times to frightful outbursts. Driven by famine and despair, these poor wretches must have rifled the carriage before de Sucy reached it. The old general and his young wife, whom he had left in it lying on piles of clothes and wrapped

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in mantles and pelisses, were now on the snow, crouching before the fire. One door of the carriage was already torn off.

No sooner did the men about the fire hear the tread of the major's horse than a hoarse cry, the cry of famine, arose,—

"A horse! a horse!"

Those voices formed but one voice.

"Back! back! look out for yourself!" cried two or three soldiers, aiming at the mare. Philippe threw himself before his animal, crying out, —

"You villains! I'll throw you into your own fire. There are plenty of dead horses up there. Go and fetch them."

"Is n't he a joker, that officer! One, two — get out of the way," cried a colossal grenadier. "No, you won't, hey! Well, as you please, then."

A woman's cry rose higher than the report of the musket. Philippe fortunately was not touched, but Bichette, mortally wounded, was struggling in the throes of death. Three men darted forward and dispatched her with their bayonets.

"Cannibals!" cried Philippe, "let me at any rate take the horse-cloth and my pistols."

"Pistols, yes," replied the grenadier. "But as for that horse-cloth, no! here 's a poor fellow afoot, with nothing in his stomach for two days, and shivering in his rags. It is our general."

Philippe kept silence as he looked at the man, whose boots were worn out, his trousers torn in a dozen places, while nothing but a ragged fatigue-cap covered with ice was on his head. He hastened, however, to take

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his pistols. Five men dragged the mare to the fire, and cut her up with the dexterity of a Parisian butcher. The pieces were instantly seized and flung upon the embers.

The major went up to the young woman, who had uttered a cry on recognizing him. He found her motionless, seated on a cushion beside the fire. She looked at him silently, without smiling. Philippe then saw the soldier to whom he had confided the carriage; the man was wounded. Overcome by numbers, he had been forced to yield to the malingerers who attacked him; and, like the dog who defended to the last possible moment his master's dinner, he had taken his share of the booty, and was now sitting beside the fire, wrapped in a white sheet by way of cloak, and turning carefully on the embers a slice of the mare. Philippe saw upon his face the joy these preparations gave him. The Comte de Vandières, who, for the last few days, had fallen into a state of second childhood, was seated on a cushion beside his wife, looking fixedly at the fire, which was beginning to thaw his torpid limbs. He had shown no emotion of any kind, either at Philippe's danger, or at the fight which ended in the pillage of the carriage and their expulsion from it.

At first de Sucy took the hand of the young countess, as if to show her his affection, and the grief he felt at seeing her reduced to such utter misery; then he grew silent; seated beside her on a heap of snow which was turning into a rivulet as it melted, he yielded himself up to the happiness of being warm, forgetting their peril, forgetting all things. His face assumed, in spite of himself, an expression of almost stupid joy, and he waited

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with impatience till the fragment of the mare given to his orderly was cooked. The smell of the roasting flesh increased his hunger, and his hunger silenced his heart, his courage, and his love. He looked, without anger, at the results of the pillage of his carriage. All the men seated around the fire had shared his blankets, cushions, pelisses, robes, also the clothing of the Comte and Comtesse de Vandières and his own. Philippe looked about him to see if there was anything left in or near the vehicle that was worth saving. By the light of the flames he saw gold and diamonds and plate scattered everywhere, no one having thought it worth his while to take any.

Each of the individuals collected by chance around this fire maintained a silence that was almost horrible, and did nothing but what he judged necessary for his own welfare. Their misery was even grotesque. Faces, discolored by cold, were covered with a layer of mud, on which tears had made a furrow from the eyes to the beard, showing the thickness of that miry mask. The filth of their long beards made these men still more repulsive. Some were wrapped in the countess's shawls, others wore the trappings of horses and muddy saddlecloths, or masses of rags from which the hoar-frost hung; some had a boot on one leg and a shoe on the other; in fact, there were none whose costume did not present some laughable singularity. But in presence of such amusing sights the men themselves were grave and gloomy. The silence was broken only by the snapping of the wood, the crackling of the flames, the distant murmur of the camps, and the blows of the sabre given to what remained of Bichette in

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search of her tenderest morsels. A few miserable creatures, perhaps more weary than the rest, were sleeping; when one of their number rolled into the fire no one attempted to help him out. These stern logicians argued that if he were not dead his burns would warn him to find a safer place. If the poor wretch waked in the flames and perished, no one cared. Two or three soldiers looked at each other to justify their own indifference by that of others. Twice this scene had taken place before the eyes of the countess, who said nothing. When the various pieces of Bichette, placed here and there upon the embers, were sufficiently broiled, each man satisfied his hunger with the gluttony that disgusts us when we see it in animals.

"This is the first time I ever saw thirty infantrymen on one horse," cried the grenadier who had shot the mare.

It was the only jest made that night which proved the national character.

Soon the great number of these poor soldiers wrapped themselves in what they could find and lay down on planks, or whatever would keep them from contact with the snow, and slept, heedless of the morrow. When the major was warm, and his hunger appeased, an invincible desire to sleep weighed down his eyelids. During the short moment of his struggle against that desire he looked at the young woman, who had turned her face to the fire and was now asleep, leaving her closed eyes and a portion of her forehead exposed to sight. She was wrapped in a furred pelisse and a heavy dragoon's cloak; her head rested on a pillow stained with blood; an astrachan hood,

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kept in place by a handkerchief knotted round her neck, preserved her face from the cold as much as possible. Her feet were wrapped in the cloak. Thus rolled into a bundle, as it were, she looked like nothing at all. Was she the last of the *vivandières?* Was she a charming woman, the glory of a lover, the queen of Parisian salons? Alas! even the eye of her most devoted friend could trace no sign of anything feminine in that mass of rags and tatters. Love had succumbed to cold in the heart of a woman!

Through the thick veils of irresistible sleep, the major soon saw the husband and wife as mere points or formless objects. The flames of the fire, those outstretched figures, the relentless cold, waiting, not three feet distant from that fugitive heat, became all a dream. One importunate thought terrified Philippe:

"If I sleep, we shall all die; I will not sleep," he said to himself.

And yet he slept.

A terrible clamor and an explosion awoke him an hour later. The sense of his duty, the peril of his friend, fell suddenly on his heart. He uttered a cry that was like a roar. He and his orderly were alone afoot. A sea of fire lay before them in the darkness of the night, licking up the cabins and the bivouacs; cries of despair, howls, and imprecations reached their ears; they saw against the flames thousands of human beings with agonized or furious faces. In the midst of that hell, a column of soldiers was forcing its way to the bridge, between two hedges of dead bodies.

"It is the retreat of the rear-guard!" cried the major. "All hope is gone!"

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"I have saved your carriage, Philippe," said a friendly voice.

Turning round, de Sucy recognized the young aide-de-camp in the flaring of the flames.

"Ah! all is lost!" replied the major, "they have eaten my horse; and how can I make this stupid general and his wife walk?"

"Take a brand from the fire and threaten them."

"Threaten the countess!"

"Good-bye," said the aide-de-camp, "I have scarcely time to get across that fatal river — and I *must;* I have a mother in France. What a night! These poor wretches prefer to lie here in the snow; half will allow themselves to perish in those flames rather than rise and move on. It is four o'clock, Philippe! In two hours the Russians will begin to move. I assure you you will again see the Bérésina choked with corpses. Philippe! think of yourself! You have no horses, you cannot carry the countess in your arms. Come — come with me!" he said urgently, pulling de Sucy by the arm.

"My friend! abandon Stéphanie!"

De Sucy seized the countess, made her stand upright, shook her with the roughness of a despairing man, and compelled her to wake up. She looked at him with fixed, dead eyes.

"You must walk, Stéphanie, or we shall all die here."

For all answer the countess tried to drop again upon the snow and sleep. The aide-de-camp seized a brand from the fire and waved it in her face.

"We will save her in spite of herself!" cried Phi-

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lippe, lifting the countess and placing her in the carriage.

He returned to implore the help of his friend. Together they lifted the old general, without knowing whether he were dead or alive, and put him beside his wife. The major then rolled over the men who were sleeping on his blankets, which he tossed into the carriage, together with some roasted fragments of his mare.

"What do you mean to do?" asked the aide-de-camp.

"Drag them."

"You are crazy."

"True," said Philippe, crossing his arms in despair.

Suddenly, he was seized by a last despairing thought.

"To you," he said, grasping the sound arm of his orderly, "I confide her for one hour. Remember that you must die sooner than let any one approach her."

The major then snatched up the countess's diamonds, held them in one hand, drew his sabre with the other, and began to strike with the flat of its blade such of the sleepers as he thought the most intrepid. He succeeded in awaking the colossal grenadier, and two other men whose rank it was impossible to tell.

"We are done for!" he said.

"I know it," said the grenadier, "but I don't care."

"Well, death for death, would n't you rather sell your life for a pretty woman, and take your chances of seeing France?"

"I 'd rather sleep," said a man, rolling over on the snow, "and if you trouble me again, I 'll stick my bayonet into your stomach."

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"What is the business, my colonel?" said the grenadier. "That man is drunk; he 's a Parisian; he likes his ease."

"That is yours, my brave grenadier," cried the major, offering him a string of diamonds, "if you will follow me and fight like a madman. The Russians are ten minutes' march from here; they have horses; we are going up to their first battery for a pair."

"But the sentinels?"

"One of us three —" he interrupted himself, and turned to the aide-de-camp. "You will come, Hippolyte, won't you?"

Hippolyte nodded.

"One of us," continued the major, "will take care of the sentinel. Besides, perhaps they are asleep too, those cursed Russians."

"Forward! major, you 're a brave one! But you 'll give me a lift on your carriage?" said the grenadier.

"Yes, if you don't leave your skin up there — If I fall, Hippolyte, and you, grenadier, promise me to do your utmost to save the countess."

"Agreed!" cried the grenadier.

They started for the Russian lines, toward one of the batteries which had so decimated the hapless wretches lying on the banks of the river. A few moments later, the gallop of two horses echoed over the snow, and the wakened artillery men poured out a volley which ranged above the heads of the sleeping men. The pace of the horses was so fleet that their steps resounded like the blows of a blacksmith on his anvil. The generous aide-de-camp was killed. The athletic grenadier was safe and sound. Philippe in

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defending Hippolyte had received a bayonet in his shoulder; but he clung to his horse's mane, and clasped him so tightly with his knees that the animal was held as in a vice.

"God be praised!" cried the major, finding his orderly untouched and the carriage in its place.

"If you are just, my officer, you will get me the cross for this," said the man. "We've played a fine game of guns and sabres here, I can tell you."

"We have done nothing yet — Harness the horses. Take these ropes."

"They are not long enough."

"Grenadier, turn over those sleepers, and take their shawls and linen, to eke out."

"*Tiens!* that's one dead," said the grenadier, stripping the first man he came to. "Bless me! what a joke, they are all dead!"

"All?"

"Yes, all; seems as if horse-meat must be indigestible if eaten with snow."

The words made Philippe tremble. The cold was increasing.

"My God! to lose the woman I have saved a dozen times!"

The major shook the countess.

"Stéphanie! Stéphanie!"

The young woman opened her eyes.

"Madame! we are saved."

"Saved!" she repeated, sinking down again.

The horses were harnessed as best they could. The major, holding his sabre in his well hand, with his pistols in his belt, gathered up the reins with the other hand

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and mounted one horse while the grenadier mounted the other. The orderly, whose feet were frozen, was thrown inside the carriage, across the general and the countess. Excited by pricks from a sabre, the horses drew the carriage rapidly, with a sort of fury, to the plain, where innumerable obstacles awaited it. It was impossible to force a way without danger of crushing the sleeping men, women, and even children, who refused to move when the grenadier awoke them. In vain did Monsieur de Sucy endeavor to find the swathe cut by the passage of the rear-guard through the mass of human beings; it was already obliterated, like the wake of a vessel through the sea. They could only creep along, being often stopped by soldiers who threatened to kill their horses.

"Do you want to reach the bridge?" said the grenadier.

"At the cost of my life — at the cost of the whole world!"

"Then forward, march! you can't make omelets without breaking eggs."

And the grenadier of the guard urged the horses over men and bivouacs with bloody wheels and a double line of corpses on either side of them. We must do him the justice to say that he never spared his breath in shouting in stentorian tones, —

"Look out there, carrion!"

"Poor wretches!" cried the major.

"Pooh! that or the cold, that or the cannon," said the grenadier, prodding the horses, and urging them on.

A catastrophe, which might well have happened to

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them much sooner, put a stop to their advance. The carriage was overturned.

"I expected it," cried the imperturbable grenadier. "Ho! ho! your man is dead."

"Poor Laurent!" said the major.

"Laurent? Was he in the 5th chasseurs?"

"Yes."

"Then he was my cousin. Oh, well, this dog's life is n't happy enough to waste any joy in grieving for him."

The carriage could not be raised; the horses were taken out with serious and, as it proved, irreparable loss of time. The shock of the overturn was so violent that the young countess, roused from her lethargy, threw off her coverings and rose.

"Philippe, where are we?" she cried in a gentle voice, looking about her.

"Only five hundred feet from the bridge. We are now going to cross the Bérésina, Stéphanie, and once across I will not torment you any more; you shall sleep; we shall be in safety, and can reach Wilna easily. — God grant that she may never know what her life has cost!" he thought.

"Philippe! you are wounded!"

"That is nothing."

Too late! the fatal hour had come. The Russian cannon sounded the reveille. Masters of Studzianka, they could sweep the plain, and by daylight the major could see two of their columns moving and forming on the heights. A cry of alarm arose from the multitude, who started to their feet in an instant. Every man now understood his danger instinctively, and the whole

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mass rushed to gain the bridge with the motion of a wave.

The Russians came down with the rapidity of a conflagration. Men, women, children, horses, — all rushed tumultuously to the bridge. Fortunately the major, who was carrying the countess, was still at some distance from it. General Éblé had just set fire to the supports on the other bank. In spite of the warnings shouted to those who were rushing upon the bridge, not a soul went back. Not only did the bridge go down crowded with human beings, but the impetuosity of that flood of men toward the fatal bank was so furious that a mass of humanity poured itself violently into the river like an avalanche. Not a cry was heard; the only sound was like the dropping of monstrous stones into the water. Then the Bérésina was a mass of floating corpses.

The retrograde movement of those who now fell back into the plain to escape the death before them was so violent, and their concussion against those who were advancing from the rear so terrible, that numbers were smothered or trampled to death. The Comte and Comtesse de Vandières owed their lives to their carriage, behind which Philippe forced them, using it as a breastwork. As for the major and the grenadier, they found their safety in their strength. They killed to escape being killed.

This hurricane of human beings, the flux and reflux of living bodies, had the effect of leaving for a few short moments the whole bank of the Bérésina deserted. The multitude were surging to the plain. If a few men rushed to the river, it was less in the hope

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of reaching the other bank, which to them was France, than to rush from the horrors of Siberia. Despair proved an ægis to some bold hearts. One officer sprang from ice-cake to ice-cake, and reached the opposite shore. A soldier clambered miraculously over mounds of dead bodies and heaps of ice. The multitude finally comprehended that the Russians would not put to death a body of twenty thousand men, without arms, torpid, stupid, unable to defend themselves; and each man awaited his fate with horrible resignation. Then the major and the grenadier, the general and his wife, remained almost alone on the river bank, a few steps from the spot where the bridge had been. They stood there, with dry eyes, silent, surrounded by heaps of dead. A few sound soldiers, a few officers to whom the emergency had restored their natural energy, were near them. This group consisted of some fifty men in all. The major noticed at a distance of some two hundred yards the remains of another bridge intended for carriages and destroyed the day before.

"Let us make a raft!" he cried.

He had hardly uttered the words before the whole group rushed to the ruins, and began to pick up iron bolts, and screws, and pieces of wood and ropes, whatever materials they could find that were suitable for the construction of a raft. A score of soldiers and officers, who were armed, formed a guard, commanded by the major, to protect the workers against the desperate attacks which might be expected from the crowd, if their scheme was discovered. The instinct of freedom, strong in all prisoners, inspiring them to miraculous acts, can only be compared with that which now drove to action these unfortunate Frenchmen.

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"The Russians! the Russians are coming!" cried the defenders to the workers; and the work went on, the raft increased in length and breadth and depth. Generals, soldiers, colonel, all put their shoulders to the wheel; it was a true image of the building of Noah's ark. The young countess, seated beside her husband, watched the progress of the work with regret that she could not help it; and yet she did assist in making knots to secure the cordage.

At last the raft was finished. Forty men launched it on the river, a dozen others holding the cords which moored it to the shore. But no sooner had the builders seen their handy-work afloat, than they sprang from the bank with odious selfishness. The major, fearing the fury of this first rush, held back the countess and the general, but too late he saw the whole raft covered, men pressing together like crowds at a theatre.

"Savages!" he cried, "it was I who gave you the idea of that raft. I have saved you, and you deny me a place."

A confused murmur answered him. The men at the edge of the raft, armed with long sticks, pressed with violence against the shore to send off the frail construction with sufficient impetus to force its way through corpses and ice-floes to the other shore.

"Thunder of heaven! I'll sweep you into the water if you don't take the major and his two companions," cried the stalwart grenadier, who swung his sabre, stopped the departure, and forced the men to stand closer in spite of furious outcries.

"I shall fall," — "I am falling," — "Push off! push off! — Forward!" resounded on all sides.

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The major looked with haggard eyes at Stéphanie, who lifted hers to heaven with a feeling of sublime resignation.

"To die with thee!" she said.

There was something even comical in the position of the men in possession of the raft. Though they were uttering awful groans and imprecations, they dared not resist the grenadier, for in truth they were so closely packed together, that a push to one man might send half of them overboard. This danger was so pressing that a cavalry captain endeavored to get rid of the grenadier; but the latter, seeing the hostile movement of the officer, seized him round the waist and flung him into the water, crying out, —

"Ha! ha! my duck, do you want to drink? Well, then, drink! — Here are two places," he cried. "Come, major, toss me the little woman and follow yourself. Leave that old fossil, who 'll be dead by to-morrow."

"Make haste!" cried the voice of all, as one man.

"Come, major, they are grumbling, and they have a right to do so."

The Comte de Vandières threw off his wrappings and showed himself in his general's uniform.

"Let us save the count," said Philippe.

Stéphanie pressed his hand, and throwing herself on his breast, she clasped him tightly.

"Adieu!" she said.

They had understood each other.

The Comte de Vandières recovered sufficient strength and presence of mind to spring upon the raft, whither Stéphanie followed him, after turning a last look to Philippe.

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"Major! will you take my place? I don't care a fig for life," cried the grenadier. "I've neither wife nor child nor mother."

"I confide them to your care," said the major, pointing to the count and his wife.

"Then be easy; I'll care for them, as though they were my very eyes."

The raft was now sent off with so much violence toward the opposite side of the river, that as it touched ground, the shock was felt by all. The count, who was at the edge of it, lost his balance and fell into the river; as he fell, a cake of sharp ice caught him, and cut off his head, flinging it to a great distance.

"See there! major!" cried the grenadier.

"Adieu!" said a woman's voice.

Philippe de Sucy fell to the ground, overcome with horror and fatigue.

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III.

THE CURE.

"My poor niece became insane," continued the physician, after a few moments' silence. "Ah! monsieur," he said, seizing the marquis's hand, "life has been awful indeed for that poor little woman, so young, so delicate! After being, by dreadful fatality, separated from the grenadier, whose name was Fleuriot, she was dragged about for two years at the heels of the army, the plaything of a crowd of wretches. She was often, they tell me, barefooted, and scarcely clothed; for months together, she had no care, no food but what she could pick up; sometimes kept in hospitals, sometimes driven away like an animal, God alone knows the horrors that poor unfortunate creature has survived. She was locked up in a madhouse, in a little town in Germany, at the time her relatives, thinking her dead, divided her property. In 1816, the grenadier Fleuriot was at an inn in Strasburg, where she went after making her escape from the madhouse. Several peasants told the grenadier that she had lived for a whole month in the forest, where they had tracked her in vain, trying to catch her, but she had always escaped them. I was then staying a few miles from Strasburg. Hearing much talk of a wild woman caught in the woods, I felt a desire to ascertain the truth of the ridiculous stories

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which were current about her. What were my feelings on beholding my own niece! Fleuriot told me all he knew of her dreadful history. I took the poor man with my niece to my home in Auvergne, where, unfortunately, I lost him some months later. He had some slight control over Madame de Vandières; he alone could induce her to wear clothing. 'Adieu,' that word, which is her only language, she seldom uttered at that time. Fleuriot had endeavored to awaken in her a few ideas, a few memories of the past; but he failed; all that he gained was to make her say that melancholy word a little oftener. Still, the grenadier knew how to amuse her and play with her; my hope was in him, but—"

He was silent for a moment.

"Here," he continued, "she has found another creature, with whom she seems to have some strange understanding. It is a poor idiotic peasant-girl, who, in spite of her ugliness and stupidity, loved a man, a mason. The mason was willing to marry her, as she had some property. Poor Geneviève was happy for a year; she dressed in her best to dance with her lover on Sunday; she comprehended love; in her heart and soul there was room for that one sentiment. But the mason, Dallot, reflected. He found a girl with all her senses, and more land than Geneviève, and he deserted the poor creature. Since then she has lost the little intellect that love developed in her; she can do nothing but watch the cows, or help at harvesting. My niece and this poor girl are friends, apparently by some invisible chain of their common destiny, by the sentiment in each which has caused their madness.

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See!" added Stéphanie's uncle, leading the marquis to a window.

The latter then saw the countess seated on the ground between Geneviève's legs. The peasant-girl, armed with a huge horn comb, was giving her whole attention to the work of disentangling the long black hair of the poor countess, who was uttering little stifled cries, expressive of some instinctive sense of pleasure. Monsieur d'Albon shuddered as he saw the utter abandonment of the body, the careless animal ease which revealed in the hapless woman a total absence of soul.

"Philippe, Philippe!" he muttered, "the past horrors are nothing! — Is there no hope?" he asked.

The old physician raised his eyes to heaven.

"Adieu, monsieur," said the marquis, pressing his hand. "My friend is expecting me. He will soon come to you."

"Then it was really she!" cried de Sucy at d'Albon's first words. "Ah! I still doubted it," he added, a few tears falling from his eyes, which were habitually stern.

"Yes, it is the Comtesse de Vandières," replied the marquis.

The colonel rose abruptly from his bed and began to dress.

"Philippe!" cried his friend, "are you mad?"

"I am no longer ill," replied the colonel, simply. "This news has quieted my suffering. What pain can I feel when I think of Stéphanie? I am going to the Bons-Hommes, to see her, speak to her, cure her. She is free. Well, happiness will smile upon us — or Providence is not in this world. Think you that that

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poor woman could hear my voice and not recover reason?"

"She has already seen you and not recognized you," said his friend, gently, for he felt the danger of Philippe's excited hopes, and tried to cast a salutary doubt upon them.

The colonel quivered; then he smiled, and made a motion of incredulity. No one dared to oppose his wish, and within a very short time he reached the old priory.

"Where is she?" he cried, on arriving.

"Hush!" said her uncle, "she is sleeping. See, here she is."

Philippe then saw the poor insane creature lying on a bench in the sun. Her head was protected from the heat by a forest of hair which fell in tangled locks over her face. Her arms hung gracefully to the ground; her body lay easily posed like that of a doe; her feet were folded under her without effort; her bosom rose and fell at regular intervals; her skin, her complexion, had that porcelain whiteness, which we admire so much in the clear transparent faces of children. Standing motionless beside her, Geneviève held in her hand a branch which Stéphanie had doubtless climbed a tall poplar to obtain, and the poor idiot was gently waving it above her sleeping companion, to chase away the flies and cool the atmosphere.

The peasant woman gazed at Monsieur Fanjat and the colonel; then, like an animal which recognizes its master, she turned her head slowly to the countess, and continued to watch her, without giving any sign of surprise or intelligence. The air was stifling; the

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stone bench glittered in the sunlight; the meadow exhaled to heaven those impish vapors which dance and dart above the herbage like silvery dust; but Geneviève seemed not to feel this all-consuming heat.

The colonel pressed the hand of the doctor violently in his own. Tears rolled from his eyes along his manly cheeks, and fell to earth at the feet of his Stéphanie.

"Monsieur," said the uncle, "for two years past, my heart is broken day by day. Soon you will be like me. You may not always weep, but you will always feel your sorrow."

The two men understood each other; and again, pressing each other's hands, they remained motionless, contemplating the exquisite calmness which sleep had cast upon that graceful creature. From time to time she gave a sigh, and that sigh, which had all the semblance of sensibilities, made the unhappy colonel tremble with hope.

"Alas!" said Monsieur Fanjat, "do not deceive yourself, monsieur; there is no meaning in her sigh."

Those who have ever watched for hours with delight the sleep of one who is tenderly beloved, whose eyes will smile to them at waking, can understand the sweet yet terrible emotion that shook the colonel's soul. To him, this sleep was an illusion; the waking might be death, death in its most awful form. Suddenly, a little goat jumped in three bounds to the bench, and smelt at Stéphanie, who waked at the sound. She sprang to her feet, but so lightly that the movement did not frighten the freakish animal; then she caught sight of Philippe, and darted away, followed by her four-footed

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friend, to a hedge of elders; there she uttered the same little cry like a frightened bird, which the two men had heard near the other gate. Then she climbed an acacia, and nestling into its tufted top, she watched the stranger with the inquisitive attention of the forest birds.

"Adieu, adieu, adieu," she said, without the soul communicating one single intelligent inflexion to the word.

It was uttered impassively, as the bird sings his note.

"She does not recognize me!" cried the colonel, in despair. "Stéphanie! it is Philippe, thy Philippe, *Philippe!*"

And the poor soldier went to the acacia; but when he was a few steps from it, the countess looked at him, as if defying him, although a slight expression of fear seemed to flicker in her eye; then, with a single bound she sprang from the acacia to a laburnum, and thence to a Norway fir, where she darted from branch to branch with extraordinary agility.

"Do not pursue her," said Monsieur Fanjat to the colonel, "or you will rouse an aversion which might become insurmountable. I will help you to tame her and make her come to you. Let us sit on this bench. If you pay no attention to her, she will come of her own accord to examine you."

"*She!* not to know me! to flee me!" repeated the colonel, seating himself on a bench with his back to a tree that shaded it, and letting his head fall upon his breast.

The doctor said nothing. Presently, the countess

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came gently down the fir-tree, letting herself swing easily on the branches, as the wind swayed them. At each branch she stopped to examine the stranger; but seeing him motionless, she at last sprang to the ground and came slowly towards him across the grass. When she reached a tree about ten feet distant, against which she leaned, Monsieur Fanjat said to the colonel in a low voice, —

"Take out, adroitly, from my right hand pocket some lumps of sugar you will feel there. Show them to her, and she will come to us. I will renounce in your favor my sole means of giving her pleasure. With sugar, which she passionately loves, you will accustom her to approach you, and to know you again."

"When she was a woman," said Philippe, sadly, "she had no taste whatever for sweet things."

When the colonel showed her the lump of sugar, holding it between the thumb and forefinger of his right hand, she again uttered her little wild cry, and sprang toward him; then she stopped, struggling against the instinctive fear he caused her; she looked at the sugar and turned away her head alternately, precisely like a dog whose master forbids him to touch his food until he has said a letter of the alphabet which he slowly repeats. At last the animal desire triumphed over fear. Stéphanie darted to Philippe, cautiously putting out her little brown hand to seize the prize, touched the fingers of her poor lover as she snatched the sugar, and fled away among the trees. This dreadful scene overcame the colonel; he burst into tears and rushed into the house.

"Has love less courage than friendship?" Monsieur

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Fanjat said to him. "I have some hope, Monsieur le baron. My poor niece was in a far worse state than that in which you now find her."

"How was that possible?" cried Philippe.

"She went naked," replied the doctor.

The colonel made a gesture of horror and turned pale. The doctor saw in that sudden pallor alarming symptoms; he felt the colonel's pulse, found him in a violent fever, and half persuaded, half compelled him to go to bed. Then he gave him a dose of opium to ensure a calm sleep.

Eight days elapsed, during which Colonel de Sucy struggled against mortal agony; tears no longer came to his eyes. His soul, often lacerated, could not harden itself to the sight of Stéphanie's insanity; but he covenanted, so to speak, with his cruel situation, and found some assuaging of his sorrow. He had the courage to slowly tame the countess by bringing her sweetmeats; he took such pains in choosing them, and he learned so well how to keep the little conquests he sought to make upon her instincts — that last shred of her intellect — that he ended by making her much *tamer* than she had ever been.

Every morning he went into the park, and if, after searching for her long, he could not discover on what tree she was swaying, nor the covert in which she crouched to play with a bird, nor the roof on which she might have clambered, he would whistle the well-known air of "Partant pour la Syrie," to which some tender memory of their love attached. Instantly, Stéphanie would run to him with the lightness of a fawn. She was now so accustomed to see him, that

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he frightened her no longer. Soon she was willing to sit upon his knee, and clasp him closely with her thin and agile arm. In that attitude — so dear to lovers! — Philippe would feed her with sugarplums. Then, having eaten those that he gave her, she would often search his pockets with gestures that had all the mechanical velocity of a monkey's motions. When she was very sure there was nothing more, she looked at Philippe with clear eyes, without ideas, without recognition. Then she would play with him, trying at times to take off his boots to see his feet, tearing his gloves, putting on his hat; she would even let him pass his hands through her hair, and take her in his arms; she accepted, but without pleasure, his ardent kisses. She would look at him silently, without emotion, when his tears flowed; but she always understood his "Partant pour la Syrie," when he whistled it, though he never succeeded in teaching her to say her own name Stéphanie.

Philippe was sustained in his agonizing enterprise by hope, which never abandoned him. When, on fine autumn mornings, he found the countess sitting peacefully on a bench, beneath a poplar now yellowing, the poor lover would sit at her feet, looking into her eyes as long as she would let him, hoping ever that the light that was in them would become intelligent. Sometimes the thought deluded him that he saw those hard immovable rays softening, vibrating, living, and he cried out, —

"Stéphanie! Stéphanie! thou hearest me, thou seest me!"

But she listened to that cry as to a noise, the sough

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ing of the wind in the tree-tops, or the lowing of the cow on the back of which she climbed. Then the colonel would wring his hands in despair, — despair that was new each day.

One evening, under a calm sky, amid the silence and peace of that rural haven, the doctor saw, from a distance, that the colonel was loading his pistols. The old man felt then that the young man had ceased to hope; he felt the blood rushing to his heart, and if he conquered the vertigo that threatened him, it was because he would rather see his niece living and mad than dead. He hastened up.

"What are you doing?" he said.

"That is for me," replied the colonel, pointing to a pistol already loaded, which was lying on the bench; "and this for her," he added, as he forced the wad into the weapon he held.

The countess was lying on the ground beside him, playing with the balls.

"Then you do not know," said the doctor, coldly, concealing his terror, "that in her sleep last night she called you: Philippe!"

"She called me!" cried the baron, dropping his pistol, which Stéphanie picked up. He took it from her hastily, caught up the one that was on the bench, and rushed away.

"Poor darling!" said the doctor, happy in the success of his lie. He pressed the poor creature to his breast, and continued speaking to himself: "He would have killed thee, selfish man! because he suffers. He does not love thee for thyself, my child! But we forgive, do we not? He is mad, out of his

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senses, but thou art only senseless. No, God alone should call thee to Him. We think thee unhappy, we pity thee because thou canst not share our sorrows, fools that we are! — But," he said, sitting down and taking her on his knee, "nothing troubles thee; thy life is like that of a bird, of a fawn — "

As he spoke she darted upon a young blackbird which was hopping near them, caught it with a little note of satisfaction, strangled it, looked at it, dead in her hand, and flung it down at the foot of a tree without a thought.

The next day, as soon as it was light, the colonel came down into the gardens, and looked about for Stéphanie, — he believed in the coming happiness. Not finding her he whistled. When his darling came to him, he took her on his arm; they walked together thus for the first time, and he led her within a group of trees, the autumn foliage of which was dropping to the breeze. The colonel sat down. Of her own accord Stéphanie placed herself on his knee. Philippe trembled with joy.

"Love," he said, kissing her hands passionately, "I am Philippe."

She looked at him with curiosity.

"Come," he said, pressing her to him, "dost thou feel my heart? It has beaten for thee alone. I love thee ever. Philippe is not dead; he is not dead, thou art on him, in his arms. Thou art *my* Stéphanie; I am thy Philippe."

"Adieu," she said, "adieu."

The colonel quivered, for he fancied he saw his own excitement communicated to his mistress. His heart-

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rending cry, drawn from him by despair, that last effort of an eternal love, of a delirious passion, was successful, the mind of his darling was awaking.

"Ah! Stéphanie! Stéphanie! we shall yet be happy."

She gave a cry of satisfaction, and her eyes brightened with a flash of vague intelligence.

"She knows me! — Stéphanie!"

His heart swelled; his eyelids were wet with tears. Then, suddenly, the countess showed him a bit of sugar she had found in his pocket while he was speaking to her. He had mistaken for human thought the amount of reason required for a monkey's trick. Philippe dropped to the ground unconscious. Mónsieur Fanjat found the countess sitting on the colonel's body. She was biting her sugar, and testifying her pleasure by pretty gestures and affectations with which, had she her reason, she might have imitated her parrot or her cat.

"Ah! my friend," said Philippe, when he came to his senses, "I die every day, every moment! I love too well! I could still bear all, if, in her madness, she had kept her woman's nature. But to see her always a savage, devoid even of modesty, to see her —"

"You want opera madness, do you? something picturesque and pleasing," said the doctor, bitterly. "Your love and your devotion yield before a prejudice. Monsieur, I have deprived myself for your sake of the sad happiness of watching over my niece; I have left to you the pleasure of playing with her; I have kept for myself the heaviest cares. While you have slept, I have watched, I have — Go, monsieur, go! abandon her! leave this sad refuge. I know how

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to live with that dear darling creature; I comprehend her madness, I watch her gestures, I know her secrets. Some day you will thank me for thus sending you away."

The colonel left the old monastery, never to return but once. The doctor was horrified when he saw the effect he had produced upon his guest, whom he now began to love when he saw him thus. Surely, if either of the two lovers were worthy of pity, it was Philippe; did he not bear alone the burden of their dreadful sorrow?

After the colonel's departure the doctor kept himself informed about him; he learned that the miserable man was living on an estate he possessed near Saint-Germain. In truth, the baron, on the faith of a dream, had formed a project which he believed would yet restore the mind of his darling. Unknown to the doctor, he spent the rest of the autumn in preparing for his enterprise. A little river flowed through his park and inundated during the winter the marshes on either side of it, giving it some resemblance to the Bérésina. The village of Satout, on the heights above, closed in, like Studzianka, the scene of horror. The colonel collected workmen to deepen the banks, and by the help of his memory, he copied in his park the shore where General Éblé destroyed the bridge. He planted piles, and made buttresses and burned them, leaving their charred and blackened ruins, standing in the water from shore to shore. Then he gathered fragments of all kinds, like those of which the raft was built. He ordered dilapidated uniforms and clothing of every grade, and hired hundreds of peasants to

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wear them; he erected huts and cabins for the purpose of burning them. In short, he forgot nothing that might recall that most awful of all scenes, and he succeeded.

Toward the last of December, when the snow had covered with its thick, white mantle all his imitative preparations, he recognized the Bérésina. This false Russia was so terribly truthful, that several of his army comrades recognized the scene of their past misery at once. Monsieur de Sucy took care to keep secret the motive for this tragic imitation, which was talked of in several Parisian circles as a proof of insanity.

Early in January, 1820, the colonel drove in a carriage, the very counterpart of the one in which he had driven the Comte and Comtesse de Vandières from Moscow to Studzianka. The horses, too, were like those he had gone, at the peril of his life, to fetch from the Russian outposts. He himself wore the soiled fantastic clothing, the same weapons, as on the 29th of November, 1812. He had let his beard grow, also his hair, which was tangled and matted, and his face was neglected, so that nothing might be wanting to represent the awful truth.

"I can guess your purpose," cried Monsieur Fanjat, when he saw the colonel getting out of the carriage. "If you want it to succeed, do not let my niece see you in that equipage. To-night I will give her opium. During her sleep, we will dress her as she was at Studzianka, and place her in the carriage. I will follow you in another vehicle."

About two in the morning, the sleeping countess was placed in the carriage and wrapped in heavy coverings.

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A few peasants with torches lighted up this strange abduction. Suddenly, a piercing cry broke the silence of the night. Philippe and the doctor turned, and saw Geneviève coming half-naked from the ground-floor room in which she slept.

"Adieu, adieu! all is over, adieu!" she cried, weeping hot tears.

"Geneviève, what troubles you?" asked the doctor.

Geneviève shook her head with a motion of despair, raised her arm to heaven, looked at the carriage, uttering a long-drawn moan with every sign of the utmost terror; then she returned to her room silently.

"That is a good omen!" cried the colonel. "She feels she is to lose her companion. Perhaps she *sees* that Stéphanie will recover her reason."

"God grant it!" said Monsieur Fanjat, who himself was affected by the incident.

Ever since he had made a close study of insanity, the good man had met with many examples of the prophetic faculty and the gift of second sight, proofs of which are frequently given by alienated minds, and which may also be found, so travellers say, among certain tribes of savages.

As the colonel had calculated, Stéphanie crossed the fictitious plain of the Bérésina at nine o'clock in the morning, when she was awakened by a cannon shot not a hundred yards from the spot where the experiment was to be tried. This was a signal. Hundreds of peasants made a frightful clamor like that on the shore of the river that memorable night, when twenty thousand stragglers were doomed to death or slavery by their own folly.

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At the cry, at the shot, the countess sprang from the carriage, and ran, with delirious emotion, over the snow to the banks of the river; she saw the burned bivouacs and the charred remains of the bridge, and the fatal raft, which the men were launching into the icy waters of the Bérésina. The major, Philippe, was there, striking back the crowd with his sabre. Madame de Vandières gave a cry, which went to all hearts, and threw herself before the colonel, whose heart beat wildly. She seemed to gather herself together, and, at first, looked vaguely at the singular scene. For an instant, as rapid as the lightning's flash, her eyes had that lucidity, devoid of mind, which we admire in the glittering eye of birds; then passing her hand across her brow with the keen expression of one who meditates, she contemplated the living memory of a past scene spread before her, and, turning quickly to Philippe, she *saw him*. An awful silence reigned in the crowd. The colonel gasped, but dared not speak; the doctor wept. Stéphanie's sweet face colored faintly; then, from tint to tint, it returned to the brightness of youth, till it glowed with a beautiful crimson. Life and happiness, lighted by intelligence, came nearer and nearer like a conflagration. Convulsive trembling rose from her feet to her heart. Then these phenomena seemed to blend in one as Stéphanie's eyes cast forth a celestial ray, the flame of a living soul. She lived, she thought! She shuddered, with fear perhaps, for God himself unloosed that silent tongue, and cast anew His fires into that long-extinguished soul. Human will came with its full electric torrent, and vivified the body from which it had been driven.

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"Stéphanie!" cried the colonel.

"Oh! it is Philippe," said the poor countess.

She threw herself into the trembling arms that the colonel held out to her, and the clasp of the lovers frightened the spectators. Stéphanie burst into tears. Suddenly her tears stopped, she stiffened as though the lightning had touched her, and said in a feeble voice, —

"Adieu, Philippe; I love thee, adieu!"

"Oh! she is dead," cried the colonel, opening his arms.

The old doctor received the inanimate body of his niece, kissed it as though he were a young man, and carrying it aside, sat down with it still in his arms on a pile of wood. He looked at the countess and placed his feeble trembling hand upon her heart. That heart no longer beat.

"It is true," he said, looking up at the colonel, who stood motionless, and then at Stéphanie, on whom death was placing that resplendent beauty, that fugitive halo, which is, perhaps, a pledge of the glorious future — "Yes, she is dead."

"Ah! that smile," cried Philippe, "do you see that smile? Can it be true?"

"She is turning cold," replied Monsieur Fanjat.

Monsieur de Sucy made a few steps to tear himself away from the sight; but he stopped, whistled the air that Stéphanie had known, and when she did not come to him, went on with staggering steps like a drunken man, still whistling, but never turning back.

General Philippe de Sucy was thought in the social world to be a very agreeable man, and above all a

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very gay one. A few days ago, a lady complimented him on his good humor, and the charming equability of his nature.

"Ah! madame," he said, "I pay dear for my liveliness in my lonely evenings."

"Are you ever alone?" she said.

'No," he replied smiling.

If a judicious observer of human nature could have seen at that moment the expression on the Comte de Sucy's face, he would perhaps have shuddered.

"Why don't you marry?" said the lady, who had several daughters at school. "You are rich, titled, and of ancient lineage; you have talents, and a great future before you; all things smile upon you."

"Yes," he said, "but a smile kills me."

The next day the lady heard with great astonishment that Monsieur de Sucy had blown his brains out during the night. The upper ranks of society talked in various ways over this extraordinary event, and each person looked for the cause of it. According to the proclivities of each reasoner, play, love, ambition, hidden disorders, and vices, explained the catastrophe, the last scene of a drama begun in 1812. Two men alone, a marquis and former deputy, and an aged physician, knew that Philippe de Sucy was one of those strong men to whom God has given the unhappy power of issuing daily in triumph from awful combats which they fight with an unseen monster. If, for a moment, God withdraws from such men His all-powerful hand, they succumb.

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A DRAMA ON THE SEASHORE.

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A DRAMA ON THE SEASHORE.

To Madame la Princesse Caroline Galitzin de Genthod, née Comtesse Walewska.
Homage and remembrances of
The Author.

Nearly all young men have a compass with which they delight in measuring the future. When their will is equal to the breadth of the angle at which they open it the world is theirs. But this phenomenon of the inner life takes place only at a certain age. That age, which for all men lies between twenty-two and twenty-eight, is the period of great thoughts, of fresh conceptions, because it is the age of immense desires. After that age, short as the seed-time, comes that of execution. There are, as it were, two youths, — the youth of belief, the youth of action; these are often commingled in men whom Nature has favored and who, like Cæsar, like Newton, like Bonaparte, are the greatest among great men.

I was measuring how long a time it might take a thought to develop. Compass in hand, standing on a rock some hundred fathoms above the ocean, the waves of which were breaking on the reef below, I surveyed

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my future, filling it with books as an engineer or builder traces on vacant ground a palace or a fort.

The sea was beautiful; I had just dressed after bathing; and I awaited Pauline, who was also bathing, in a granite cove floored with fine sand, the most coquettish bath-room that Nature ever devised for her water-fairies. The spot was at the farther end of Croisic, a dainty little peninsula in Brittany; it was far from the port, and so inaccessible that the coast-guard seldom thought it necessary to pass that way. To float in ether after floating on the wave! — ah! who would not have floated on the future as I did! Why was I thinking? Whence comes evil? — who knows! Ideas drop into our hearts or into our heads without consulting us. No courtesan was ever more capricious nor more imperious than conception is to artists; we must grasp it, like fortune, by the hair when it comes.

Astride upon my thought, like Astolphe on his hippogriff, I was galloping through worlds, suiting them to my fancy. Presently, as I looked about me to find some omen for the bold productions my wild imagination was urging me to undertake, a pretty cry, the cry of a woman issuing refreshed and joyous from a bath, rose above the murmur of the rippling fringes as their flux and reflux marked a white line along the shore. Hearing that note as it gushed from a soul, I fancied I saw among the rocks the foot of an angel, who with outspread wings cried out to me, "Thou shalt succeed!" I came down radiant, light-hearted; I bounded like a pebble rolling down a rapid slope. When she saw me, she said, —

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"What is it?"

I did not answer; my eyes were moist. The night before, Pauline had understood my sorrows, as she now understood my joy, with the magical sensitiveness of a harp that obeys the variations of the atmosphere. Human life has glorious moments. Together we walked in silence along the beach. The sky was cloudless, the sea without a ripple; others might have thought them merely two blue surfaces, the one above the other, but we — we who heard without the need of words, we who could evoke between these two infinitudes the illusions that nourish youth, — we pressed each other's hands at every change in the sheet of water or the sheets of air, for we took those slight phenomena as the visible translation of our double thought. Who has never tasted in wedded love that moment of illimitable joy when the soul seems freed from the trammels of flesh, and finds itself restored, as it were, to the world whence it came? Are there not hours when feelings clasp each other and fly upward, like children taking hands and running, they scarce know why? It was thus we went along.

At the moment when the village roofs began to show like a faint gray line on the horizon, we met a fisherman, a poor man returning to Croisic. His feet were bare; his linen trousers ragged round the bottom; his shirt of common sailcloth, and his jacket tatters. This abject poverty pained us; it was like a discord amid our harmonies. We looked at each other, grieving mutually that we had not at that moment the power to dip into the treasury of Aboul Casem. But we saw a splendid lobster and a crab fastened to a string

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which the fisherman was dangling in his right hand, while with the left he held his tackle and his net.

We accosted him with the intention of buying his haul, — an idea which came to us both, and was expressed in a smile, to which I responded by a slight pressure of the arm I held and drew toward my heart. It was one of those nothings of which memory makes poems when we sit by the fire and recall the hour when that nothing moved us, and the place where it did so, — a *mirage* the effects of which have never been noted down, though it appears on the objects that surround us in moments when life sits lightly and our hearts are full. The loveliest scenery is that we make ourselves. What man with any poesy in him does not remember some mere mass of rock, which holds, it may be, a greater place in his memory than the celebrated landscapes of other lands, sought at great cost. Beside that rock, tumultuous thoughts! There a whole life evolved; there all fears dispersed; there the rays of hope descended to the soul! At this moment, the sun, sympathizing with these thoughts of love and of the future, had cast an ardent glow upon the savage flanks of the rock; a few wild mountain flowers were visible; the stillness and the silence magnified that rugged pile, — really sombre, though tinted by the dreamer, and beautiful beneath its scanty vegetation, the warm chamomile, the Venus' tresses with their velvet leaves. Oh, lingering festival; oh, glorious decorations; oh, happy exaltation of human forces! Once already the lake of Brienne had spoken to me thus. The rock of Croisic may be perhaps the last of these my joys. If so, what will become of Pauline?

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"Have you had a good catch to-day, my man?" I said to the fisherman.

"Yes, monsieur," he replied, stopping and turning toward us the swarthy face of those who spend whole days exposed to the reflection of the sun upon the water.

That face was an emblem of long resignation, of the patience of a fisherman and his quiet ways. The man had a voice without harshness, kind lips, evidently no ambition, and something frail and puny about him. Any other sort of countenance would, at that moment, have jarred upon us.

"Where shall you sell your fish?"

"In the town."

"How much will they pay you for that lobster?"

"Fifteen sous."

"And the crab?"

"Twenty sous."

"Why so much difference between a lobster and a crab?"

"Monsieur, the crab is much more delicate eating. Besides, it's as malicious as a monkey, and it seldom lets you catch it."

"Will you let us buy the two for a hundred sous?" asked Pauline.

The man seemed petrified.

"You shall not have it!" I said to her, laughing. "I 'll pay ten francs; we should count the emotions in."

"Very well," she said, "then I 'll pay ten francs, two sous."

"Ten francs, ten sous."

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"Twelve francs."

"Fifteen francs."

"Fifteen francs, fifty centimes," she said.

"One hundred francs."

"One hundred and fifty francs."

I yielded. We were not rich enough at that moment to bid higher. Our poor fisherman did not know whether to be angry at a hoax, or to go mad with joy; we drew him from his quandary by giving him the name of our landlady and telling him to take the lobster and the crab to her house.

"Do you earn enough to live on?" I asked the man, in order to discover the cause of his evident penury.

"With great hardships, and always poorly," he replied. "Fishing on the coast, when one has n't a boat or deep-sea nets, nothing but pole and line, is a very uncertain business. You see we have to wait for the fish, or the shell-fish; whereas a real fisherman puts out to sea for them. It is so hard to earn a living this way that I 'm the only man in these parts who fishes alongshore. I spend whole days without getting anything. To catch a crab, it must go to sleep, as this one did, and a lobster must be silly enough to stay among the rocks. Sometimes after a high tide the mussels come in and I grab them."

"Well, taking one day with another, how much do you earn?"

"Oh, eleven or twelve sous. I could do with that if I were alone; but I have got my old father to keep, and he can't do anything, the good man, because he 's blind."

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At these words, said simply, Pauline and I looked at each other without a word; then I asked, —

"Have n't you a wife, or some good friend?"

He cast upon us one of the most lamentable glances that I ever saw as he answered, —

"If I had a wife I must abandon my father; I could not feed him and a wife and children too."

"Well, my poor lad, why don't you try to earn more at the salt marshes, or by carrying the salt to the harbor?"

"Ah, monsieur, I could n't do that work three months. I am not strong enough, and if I died my father would have to beg. I am forced to take a business which only needs a little knack and a great deal of patience."

"But how can two persons live on twelve sous a day?"

"Oh, monsieur, we eat cakes made of buckwheat, and barnacles which I get off the rocks."

"How old are you?"

"Thirty-seven."

"Did you ever leave Croisic?"

"I went once to Guérande to draw for the conscription; and I went to Savenay to the messieurs who measure for the army. If I had been half an inch taller they 'd have made me a soldier. I should have died of my first march, and my poor father would to-day be begging his bread."

I had thought out many dramas; Pauline was accustomed to great emotions beside a man so suffering as myself; well, never had either of us listened to words so moving as these. We walked on in silence,

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measuring, each of us, the silent depths of that obscure life, admiring the nobility of a devotion which was ignorant of itself. The strength of that feebleness amazed us; the man's unconscious generosity belittled us. I saw that poor being of instinct chained to that rock like a galley-slave to his ball; watching through twenty years for shell-fish to earn a living, and sustained in his patience by a single sentiment. How many hours wasted on a lonely shore! How many hopes defeated by a change of weather! He was hanging there to a granite rock, his arm extended like that of an Indian fakir, while his father, sitting in their hovel, awaited, in silence and darkness, a meal of the coarsest bread and shell-fish, if the sea permitted.

"Do you ever drink wine?" I asked.

"Three or four times a year," he replied.

"Well, you shall drink it to-day, — you and your father; and we will send you some white bread."

"You are very kind, monsieur?"

"We will give you your dinner if you will show us the way along the shore to Batz, where we wish to see the tower which overlooks the bay between Batz and Croisic."

"With pleasure," he said. "Go straight before you, along the path you are now on, and I will follow you when I have put away my tackle."

We nodded consent, and he ran off joyfully toward the town. This meeting maintained us in our previous mental condition; but it lessened our gay lightheartedness.

"Poor man!" said Pauline, with that accent which removes from the compassion of a woman all that is

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mortifying in human pity, "ought we not to feel ashamed of our happiness in presence of such misery?"

"Nothing is so cruelly painful as to have powerless desires," I answered. "Those two poor creatures, the father and son, will never know how keen our sympathy for them is, any more than the world will know how beautiful are their lives; they are laying up their treasures in heaven."

"Oh, how poor this country is!" she said, pointing to a field inclosed by a dry stone wall, which was covered with droppings of cow's dung applied symmetrically. "I asked a peasant-woman who was busy sticking them on, why it was done; she answered that she was making fuel. Could you have imagined that when those patches of dung have dried, human beings would collect them, store them, and use them for fuel? During the winter, they are even sold as peat is sold. And what do you suppose the best dressmaker in the place can earn?—five sous a day!" adding, after a pause, "and her food."

"But see," I said, "how the winds from the sea bend or destroy everything. There are no trees. Fragments of wreckage or old vessels that are broken up are sold to those who can afford to buy; for costs of transportation are too heavy to allow them to use the firewood with which Brittany abounds. This region is fine for none but noble souls; persons without sentiments could never live here; poets and barnacles alone should inhabit it. All that ever brought a population to this rock were the salt-marshes and the factory which prepares the salt. On one side the sea; on the other, sand; above, illimitable space."

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We had now passed the town, and had reached the species of desert which separates Croisic from the village of Batz. Imagine, my dear uncle, a barren track of miles covered with the glittering sand of the seashore. Here and there a few rocks lifted their heads; you might have thought them gigantic animals couchant on the dunes. Along the coast were reefs, around which the water foamed and sparkled, giving them the appearance of great white roses, floating on the liquid surface or resting on the shore. Seeing this barren tract with the ocean on one side, and on the other the arm of the sea which runs up between Croisic and the rocky shore of Guérande, at the base of which lay the salt marshes, denuded of vegetation, I looked at Pauline and asked her if she felt the courage to face the burning sun and the strength to walk through sand.

"I have boots," she said. "Let us go," and she pointed to the tower of Batz, which arrested the eye by its immense pile placed there like a pyramid; but a slender, delicately outlined pyramid, a pyramid so poetically ornate that the imagination figured in it the earliest ruin of a great Asiatic city.

We advanced a few steps and sat down upon the portion of a large rock which was still in the shade. But it was now eleven o'clock, and the shadow, which ceased at our feet, was disappearing rapidly.

"How beautiful this silence!" she said to me; "and how the depth of it is deepened by the rhythmic quiver of the wave upon the shore."

"If you will give your understanding to the three Immensities which surround us, the water, the air, and

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the sands, and listen exclusively to the repeating sounds of flux and reflux," I answered her, "you will not be able to endure their speech; you will think it is uttering a thought which will annihilate you. Last evening, at sunset, I had that sensation; and it exhausted me."

"Oh! let us talk, let us talk," she said, after a long pause. "I understand it. No orator was ever more terrible. I think," she continued, presently, "that I perceive the causes of the harmonies which surround us. This landscape, which has but three marked colors, — the brilliant yellow of the sands, the blue of the sky, the even green of the sea, — is grand without being savage; it is immense, yet not a desert; it is monotonous, but it does not weary; it has only three elements, and yet it is varied."

"Women alone know how to render such impressions," I said. "You would be the despair of a poet, dear soul that I divine so well!"

"The extreme heat of mid-day casts into those three expressions of the infinite an all-powerful color," said Pauline, smiling. "I can here conceive the poesy and the passion of the East."

"And I can perceive its despair."

"Yes," she said, "this dune is a cloister, — a sublime cloister."

We now heard the hurried steps of our guide; he had put on his Sunday clothes. We addressed a few ordinary words to him; he seemed to think that our mood had changed, and with that reserve that comes of misery, he kept silence. Though from time to time we pressed each other's hands that we might feel the

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mutual flow of our ideas and impressions, we walked along for half an hour in silence, either because we were oppressed by the heat which rose in waves from the burning sands, or because the difficulty of walking absorbed our attention. Like children, we held each other's hands; in fact, we could hardly have made a dozen steps had we walked arm in arm. The path which led to Batz was not so much as traced. A gust of wind was enough to efface all tracks left by the hoofs of horses or the wheels of carts; but the practised eye of our guide could recognize by scraps of mud or the dung of cattle the road that crossed that desert, now descending towards the sea, then rising landward according to either the fall of the ground or the necessity of rounding some breastwork of rock. By mid-day, we were only half way.

"We will stop to rest over there," I said, pointing to a promontory of rocks sufficiently high to make it probable we could find a grotto.

The fisherman, who heard me and saw the direction in which I pointed, shook his head, and said, —

"Some one is there. All those who come from the village of Batz to Croisic, or from Croisic to Batz, go round that place; they never pass it."

These words were said in a low voice, and seemed to indicate a mystery.

"Who is he, — a robber, a murderer?"

Our guide answered only by drawing a deep breath, which redoubled our curiosity.

"But if we pass that way, would any harm happen to us?"

"Oh, no!"

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"Will you go with us?"

"No, monsieur."

"We will go, if you assure us there is no danger."

"I do not say so," replied the fisherman, hastily. "I only say that he who is there will say nothing to you, and do you no harm. He never so much as moves from his place."

"Who is it?"

"A man."

Never were two syllables pronounced in so tragic a manner. At this moment we were about fifty feet from the rocky eminence, which extended a long reef into the sea. Our guide took a path which led him round the base of the rock. We ourselves continued our way over it; but Pauline took my arm. Our guide hastened his steps in order to meet us on the other side, where the two paths came together again.

This circumstance excited our curiosity, which soon became so keen that our hearts were beating as if with a sense of fear. In spite of the heat of the day, and the fatigue caused by toiling through the sand, our souls were still surrendered to the softness unspeakable of our exquisite ecstasy. They were filled with that pure pleasure which cannot be described unless we liken it to the joy of listening to enchanting music, Mozart's *Audiamo mio ben*, for instance. When two pure sentiments blend together, what is that but two sweet voices singing? To be able to appreciate properly the emotion that held us, it would be necessary to share the state of half sensuous delight into which the events of the morning had plunged us. Admire for a long time some pretty dove with iridescent colors,

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perched on a swaying branch above a spring, and you will give a cry of pain when you see a hawk swooping down upon her, driving its steel claws into her breast, and bearing her away with murderous rapidity. When we had advanced a step or two into an open space which lay before what seemed to be a grotto, a sort of esplanade placed a hundred feet above the ocean, and protected from its fury by buttresses of rock, we suddenly experienced an electrical shudder, something resembling the shock of a sudden noise awaking us in the dead of night.

We saw, sitting on a vast granite boulder, a man who looked at us. His glance, like that of the flash of a cannon, came from two bloodshot eyes, and his stoical immobility could be compared only to the immutable granite masses that surrounded him. His eyes moved slowly, his body remaining rigid as though he were petrified. Then, having cast upon us that look which struck us like a blow, he turned his eyes once more to the limitless ocean, and gazed upon it, in spite of its dazzling light, as eagles gaze at the sun, without lowering his eyelids. Try to remember, dear uncle, one of those old oaks, whose knotty trunks, from which the branches have been lopped, rise with weird power in some lonely place, and you will have an image of this man. Here was a ruined Herculean frame, the face of an Olympian Jove, destroyed by age, by hard sea toil, by grief, by common food, and blackened as it were by lightning. Looking at his hard and hairy hands, I saw that the sinews stood out like cords of iron. Everything about him denoted strength of constitution. I noticed in a corner of the grotto a quantity

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of moss, and on a sort of ledge carved by nature on the granite, a loaf of bread, which covered the mouth of an earthenware jug. Never had my imagination, when it carried me to the deserts where early Christian anchorites spent their lives, depicted to my mind a form more grandly religious nor more horribly repentant than that of this man. You, who have a life-long experience of the confessional, dear uncle, you may never, perhaps, have seen so awful a remorse, — remorse sunk in the waves of prayer, the ceaseless supplication of a mute despair. This fisherman, this mariner, this hard, coarse Breton, was sublime through some hidden emotion. Had those eyes wept? That hand, moulded for an unwrought statue, had it struck? That rugged brow, where savage honor was imprinted, and on which strength had left vestiges of the gentleness which is an attribute of all true strength, that forehead furrowed with wrinkles, was it in harmony with the heart within? Why was this man in the granite? Why was the granite in the man? Which was the man, which was the granite? A world of fancies came into our minds. As our guide had prophesied, we passed in silence, rapidly; when he met us he saw our emotion of mingled terror and astonishment, but he made no boast of the truth of his prediction; he merely said, —

"You have seen him."

"Who is that man?"

"They call him the Man of the Vow."

You can imagine the movement with which our two heads turned at once to our guide. He was a simple-hearted fellow; he understood at once our mute in-

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quiry, and here follows what he told us; I shall try to give it as best I can in his own language, retaining his popular parlance.

"Madame, folks from Croisic and those from Batz think this man is guilty of something, and is doing a penance ordered by a famous rector to whom he confessed his sin somewhere beyond Nantes. Others think that Cambremer, that's his name, casts an evil fate on those who come within his air, and so they always look which way the wind is before they pass this rock. If it's nor'-westerly they would n't go by, no, not if their errand was to get a bit of the true cross; they'd go back, frightened. Others — they are the rich folks of Croisic — they say that Cambremer has made a vow, and that's why people call him the Man of the Vow. He is there night and day, he never leaves the place. All these sayings have some truth in them. See there," he continued, turning round to show us a thing we had not remarked, "look at that wooden cross he has set up there, to the left, to show that he has put himself under the protection of God and the holy Virgin and the saints. But the fear that people have of him keeps him as safe as if he were guarded by a troop of soldiers. He has never said one word since he locked himself up in the open air in this way; he lives on bread and water, which is brought to him every morning by his brother's daughter, a little lass about twelve years old to whom he has left his property, a pretty creature, gentle as a lamb, a nice little girl, so pleasant. She has such blue eyes, long *as that*," he added, marking a line on his thumb, "and hair like the cherubim. When you ask her:

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'Tell me, Pérotte (That's how we say Pierrette in these parts,' he remarked, interrupting himself; 'she is vowed to Saint Pierre; Cambremer is named Pierre, and he was her godfather) — 'Tell me, Pérotte, what does your uncle say to you?' — 'He says nothing to me, nothing.' — 'Well then, what does he do to you?' 'He kisses me on the forehead, Sundays.' — 'Are you afraid of him?' — 'Ah, no, no; is n't he my godfather? he would n't have anybody but me bring him his food.' Pérotte declares that he smiles when she comes; but you might as well say the sun shines in a fog; he 's as gloomy as a cloudy day."

"But," I said to him, "you excite our curiosity without satisfying it. Do you know what brought him there? Was it grief, or repentance; is it a mania; is it crime; is it — "

"Eh, monsieur, there 's no one but my father and I who know the real truth. My late mother was servant in the family of a lawyer to whom Cambremer told all by order of the priest, who would n't give him absolution until he had done so — at least, that 's what the folks of the port say. My poor mother overheard Cambremer without trying to; the lawyer's kitchen was close to the office, and that 's how she heard. She 's dead, and so is the lawyer. My mother made us promise, my father and I, not to talk about the matter to the folks of the neighborhood; but I can tell you my hair stood on end the night she told us the tale."

"Well, my man, tell it to us now, and we won't speak of it."

The fisherman looked at us; then he continued:

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"Pierre Cambremer, whom you have seen there, is the eldest of the Cambremers, who from father to son have always been sailors; their name says it — the sea bends under them. Pierre was a deep-sea fisherman. He had boats, and fished for sardine, also for the big fishes, and sold them to dealers. He'd have chartered a large vessel and trawled for cod if he had n't loved his wife so much; she was a fine woman, a Brouin of Guérande, with a good heart. She loved Cambremer so much that she could n't bear to have her man leave her for longer than to fish sardine. They lived over there, look!" said the fisherman, going up a hillock to show us an island in the little Mediterranean between the dunes where we were walking and the marshes of Guérande. "You can see the house from here. It belonged to him. Jacquette Brouin and Cambremer had only one son, a lad they loved — how shall I say? — well, they loved him like an only child, they were mad about him. How many times we have seen them at fairs buying all sorts of things to please him; it was out of all reason the way they indulged him, and so folks told them. The little Cambremer, seeing that he was never thwarted, grew as vicious as a red ass. When they told père Cambremer, 'Your son has nearly killed little such a one,' he would laugh and say: 'Bah! he 'll be a bold sailor; he 'll command the king's fleets.' — Another time, 'Pierre Cambremer, did you know your lad very nearly put out the eye of the little Pougard girl?' — 'Ha! he 'll like the girls,' said Pierre. Nothing troubled him. At ten years old the little cur fought everybody, and amused himself with cutting the hens' necks off and

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ripping up the pigs; in fact, you might say he wallowed in blood. 'He 'll be a famous soldier,' said Cambremer, 'he 's got the taste of blood.' Now, you see," said the fisherman, "I can look back and remember all that — and Cambremer, too," he added, after a pause. "By the time Jacques Cambremer was fifteen or sixteen years of age he had come to be — what shall I say? — a shark. He amused himself at Guérande, and was after the girls at Savenay. Then he wanted money. He robbed his mother, who did n't dare say a word to his father. Cambremer was an honest man who 'd have tramped fifty miles to return two sous that any one had overpaid him on a bill. At last, one day the mother was robbed of everything. During one of his father's fishing-trips Jacques carried off all she had, furniture, pots and pans, sheets, linen, everything; he sold it to go to Nantes and carry on his capers there. The poor mother wept day and night. This time it could n't be hidden from the father, and she feared him — not for herself, you may be sure of that. When Pierre Cambremer came back and saw furniture in his house which the neighbors had lent to his wife, he said, —

"'What is all this?'

"The poor woman, more dead than alive, replied:

"'We have been robbed.'

"'Where is Jacques?'

"'Jacques is off amusing himself.'

"No one knew where the scoundrel was.

"'He amuses himself too much,' said Pierre.

"Six months later the poor father heard that his son was about to be arrested in Nantes. He walked

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there on foot, which is faster than by sea, put his hands on his son, and compelled him to return home. Once here, he did not ask him, 'What have you done?' but he said: —

"'If you do not conduct yourself properly at home with your mother and me, and go fishing, and behave like an honest man, you and I will have a reckoning.'

"The crazy fellow, counting on his parent's folly, made a face; on which Pierre struck him a blow which sent Jacques to his bed for six weeks. The poor mother nearly died of grief. One night, as she was fast asleep beside her husband, a noise awoke her; she rose up quickly, and was stabbed in the arm with a knife. She cried out loud, and when Pierre Cambremer struck a light and saw his wife wounded, he thought it was the doing of robbers, — as if we ever had any in these parts, where you might carry ten thousand francs in gold from Croisic to Saint-Nazaire without ever being asked what you had in your arms. Pierre looked for his son, but he could not find him. In the morning, if that monster did n't have the face to come home, saying he had stayed at Batz all night! I should tell you that the mother had not known where to hide her money. Cambremer put his with Monsieur Dupotel at Croisic. Their son's follies had by this time cost them so much that they were half-ruined, and that was hard for folks who once had twelve thousand francs, and who owned their island. No one ever knew what Cambremer paid at Nantes to get his son away from there. Bad luck seemed to follow the family. Troubles fell upon Cambremer's brother, he needed help. Pierre said, to console him, that Jacques

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and Pérotte (the brother's daughter) could be married. Then, to help Joseph Cambremer to earn his bread, Pierre took him with him a-fishing; for the poor man was now obliged to live by his daily labor. His wife was dead of the fever, and money was owing for Pérotte's nursing. The wife of Pierre Cambremer owed about one hundred francs to divers persons for the little girl, — linen, clothes, and what not, —and it so chanced that she had sewed a bit of Spanish gold into her mattress for a nest-egg toward paying off that money. It was wrapped in paper, and on the paper was written by her: 'For Pérotte.' Jacquette Brouin had had a fine education; she could write like a clerk, and had taught her son to write too. I can't tell you how it was that that villain scented the gold, stole it, and went off to Croisic to enjoy himself. Pierre Cambremer, as if it was ordained, came back that day in his boat; as he landed he saw a bit of paper floating in the water, and he picked it up, looked at it, and carried it to his wife, who fell down as if dead, seeing her own writing. Cambremer said nothing, but he went to Croisic, and heard that his son was in a billiard room; so then he went to the mistress of the café, and said to her: —

"'I told Jacques not to use a piece of gold with which he will pay you; give it back to me, and I'll give you white money in place of it.'

"The good woman did as she was told. Cambremer took the money and just said 'Good,' and then he went home. So far, all the town knows that; but now comes what I alone know, though others have always had some suspicion of it. As I say, Cambremer came home; he told his wife to clean up their chamber, which

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is on the lower floor; he made a fire, lit two candles, placed two chairs on one side the hearth, and a stool on the other. Then he told his wife to bring him his wedding-clothes, and ordered her to put on hers. He dressed himself. When dressed, he fetched his brother, and told him to watch before the door, and warn him of any noise on either of the beaches, — that of Croisic, or that of Guérande. Then he loaded a gun, and placed it at a corner of the fireplace. Jacques came home late; he had drunk and gambled till ten o'clock, and had to get back by way of the Carnouf point. His uncle heard his hail, and he went over and fetched him, but said nothing. When Jacques entered the house, his father said to him, —

"'Sit there,' pointing to the stool. 'You are,' he said, 'before your father and mother, whom you have offended, and who will now judge you.'

"At this Jacques began to howl, for his father's face was all distorted. His mother was rigid as an oar.

"'If you shout, if you stir, if you do not sit still on that stool,' said Pierre, aiming the gun at him, 'I will shoot you like a dog.'

"Jacques was mute as a fish. The mother said nothing.

"'Here,' said Pierre, 'is a piece of paper which wrapped a Spanish gold piece. That piece of gold was in your mother's bed; she alone knew where it was. I found that paper in the water when I landed here to-day. You gave a piece of Spanish gold this night to Mère Fleurant, and your mother's piece is no longer in her bed. Explain all this.'

"Jacques said he had not taken his mother's money,

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and that the gold piece was one he had brought from Nantes.

"'I am glad of it," said Pierre; 'now prove it.'

"'I had it all along.'

"'You did not take the gold piece belonging to your mother?'

"'No.'

"'Will you swear it on your eternal life?'

He was about to swear; his mother raised her eyes to him, and said: —

"'Jacques, my child, take care; do not swear if it is not true; you can repent, you can amend; there is still time.'

"And she wept.

"'You are a this and a that,' he said; 'you have always wanted to ruin me.'

"Cambremer turned white and said, —

"'Such language to your mother increases your crime. Come, to the point! Will you swear?'

"'Yes.'

"'Then,' Pierre said, 'was there upon your gold piece the little cross which the sardine merchant who paid it to me scratched on ours?'

"Jacques broke down and wept.

"'Enough,' said Pierre. 'I shall not speak to you of the crimes you have committed before this. I do not choose that a Cambremer should die on a scaffold. Say your prayers and make haste. A priest is coming to confess you.'

"The mother had left the room; she could not hear her son condemned. After she had gone, Joseph Cambremer, the uncle, brought in the rector of Piriac, to

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whom Jacques would say nothing. He was shrewd; he knew his father would not kill him until he had made his confession.

"'Thank you, and excuse us,' said Cambremer to the priest, when he saw Jacques' obstinacy. 'I wished to give a lesson to my son, and will ask you to say nothing about it. As for you,' he said to Jacques, 'if you do not amend, the next offence you commit will be your last; I shall end it without confession.'

"And he sent him to bed. The lad thought he could still get round his father. He slept. His father watched. When he saw that his son was soundly asleep, he covered his mouth with tow, blindfolded him tightly, bound him hand and foot — 'He raged, he wept blood,' my mother heard Cambremer say to the lawyer. The mother threw herself at the father's feet.

"'He is judged and condemned,' replied Pierre; 'you must now help me to carry him to the boat.'

She refused; and Cambremer carried him alone; he laid him in the bottom of the boat, tied a stone to his neck, took the oars and rowed out of the cove to the open sea, till he came to the rock where he now is. When the poor mother, who had come up here with her brother-in-law, cried out, 'Mercy! mercy!' it was like throwing a stone at a wolf. There was a moon, and she saw the father casting her son into the water; her son, the child of her womb, and as there was no wind, she heard *Blouf!* and then nothing — neither sound nor bubble. Ah! the sea is a fine keeper of what it gets. Rowing inshore to stop his wife's cries, Cambremer found her half-dead. The two brothers

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could n't carry her the whole distance home, so they had to put her into the boat which had just served to kill her son, and they rowed back round the tower by the channel of Croisic. Well, well! the belle Brouin, as they called her, did n't last a week. She died begging her husband to burn that accursed boat. Oh! he did it. As for him, he became I don't know what; he staggered about like a man who can't carry his wine. Then he went away and was gone ten days, and after he returned he put himself where you saw him, and since he has been there he has never said one word."

The fisherman related this history rapidly and more simply than I can write it. The lower classes make few comments as they relate a thing; they tell the fact that strikes them, and present it as they feel it. This tale was made as sharply incisive as the blow of an axe.

"I shall not go to Batz," said Pauline, when we came to the upper shore of the lake.

We returned to Croisic by the salt marshes, through the labyrinth of which we were guided by our fisherman, now as silent as ourselves. The inclination of our souls was changed. We were both plunged into gloomy reflections, saddened by the recital of a drama which explained the sudden presentiment which had seized us on seeing Cambremer. Each of us had enough knowledge of life to divine all that our guide had not told of that triple existence. The anguish of those three beings rose up before us as if we had seen it in a drama, culminating in that of the father expiating his crime. We dared not look at the rock where sat the fatal man

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who held the whole countryside in awe. A few clouds dimmed the skies; mists were creeping up from the horizon. We walked through a landscape more bitterly gloomy than any our eyes had ever rested on, a nature that seemed sickly, suffering, covered with salty crust, the eczema, it might be called, of earth. Here, the soil was mapped out in squares of unequal size and shape, all encased with enormous ridges or embankments of gray earth and filled with water, to the surface of which the salt scum rises. These gullies, made by the hand of man, are again divided by causeways, along which the laborers pass, armed with long rakes, with which they drag this scum to the bank, heaping it on platforms placed at equal distances when the salt is fit to handle.

For two hours we skirted the edge of this melancholy checkerboard, where salt has stifled all forms of vegetation, and where no one ever comes but a few *paludiers*, the local name given to the laborers of the salt marshes. These men, or rather this clan of Bretons, wear a special costume: a white jacket, something like that of brewers. They marry among themselves. There is no instance of a girl of the tribe having ever married any man who was not a *paludier*.

The horrible aspects of these marshes, these sloughs, the mud of which was systematically raked, the dull gray earth that the Breton flora held in horror, were in keeping with the gloom which filled our souls. When we reached a spot where we crossed an arm of the sea, which no doubt serves to feed the stagnant salt-pools, we noticed with relief the puny vegetation which sprouted through the sand of the beach. As we crossed,

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we saw the island on which the Cambremers had lived; but we turned away our heads.

Arriving at the hotel, we noticed a billiard-table, and finding that it was the only billiard-table in Croisic, we made our preparations to leave during the night. The next day we went to Guérande. Pauline was still sad, and I myself felt a return of that fever of the brain which will destroy me. I was so cruelly tortured by the visions that came to me of those three lives, that Pauline said at last, —

"Louis, write it all down; that will change the nature of the fever within you."

So I have written you this narrative, dear uncle; but the shock of such an event has made me lose the calmness I was beginning to gain from sea-bathing and our stay in this place.

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THE RED INN.

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THE RED INN.

TO MONSIEUR LE MARQUIS DE CUSTINE.

In I know not what year a Parisian banker, who had very extensive commercial relations with Germany, was entertaining at dinner one of those friends whom men of business often make in the markets of the world through correspondence; a man hitherto personally unknown to him. This friend, the head of a rather important house in Nuremburg, was a stout worthy German, a man of taste and erudition, above all a man of pipes, having a fine, broad, Nuremburgian face, with a square open forehead adorned by a few sparse locks of yellowish hair. He was the type of the sons of that pure and noble Germany, so fertile in honorable natures, whose peaceful manners and morals have never been lost, even after seven invasions.

This stranger laughed with simplicity, listened attentively, and drank remarkably well, seeming to like champagne as much perhaps as he liked his straw-colored Johannisburger. His name was Hermann, which is that of most Germans whom authors bring upon their scene. Like a man who does nothing

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frivolously, he was sitting squarely at the banker's table and eating with that Teutonic appetite so celebrated throughout Europe, saying, in fact, a conscientious farewell to the cookery of the great Carême.

To do honor to his guest the master of the house had invited a few intimate friends, capitalists or merchants, and several agreeable and pretty women, whose pleasant chatter and frank manners were in harmony with Germanic cordiality. Really, if you could have seen, as I saw, this joyous gathering of persons who had drawn in their commercial claws, and were speculating only on the pleasures of life, you would have found no cause to hate usurious discounts, or to curse bankruptcies. Mankind can't always be doing evil. Even in the society of pirates one might find a few sweet hours during which we could fancy their sinister craft a pleasure-boat rocking on the deep.

"Before we part, Monsieur Hermann will, I trust, tell one more German story to terrify us?"

These words were said at dessert by a pale fair girl, who had read, no doubt, the tales of Hoffmann and the novels of Walter Scott. She was the only daughter of the banker, a charming young creature whose education was then being finished at the Gymnase, the plays of which she adored. At this moment the guests were in that happy state of laziness and silence which follows a delicious dinner, especially if we have presumed too far on our digestive powers. Leaning back in their chairs, their wrists lightly resting on the edge of the table, they were indolently playing with the gilded blades of their dessert-knives. When a dinner comes to this declining moment some guests will be seen to play

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with a pear seed; others roll crumbs of bread between their fingers and thumb; lovers trace indistinct letters with fragments of fruit; misers count the stones on their plate and arrange them as a manager marshals his supernumeraries at the back of the stage. These are little gastronomic felicities which Brillat-Savarin, otherwise so complete an author, overlooked in his book. The footmen had disappeared. The dessert was like a squadron after a battle: all the dishes were disabled, pillaged, damaged; several were wandering about the table, in spite of the efforts of the mistress of the house to keep them in their places. Some of the persons present were gazing at pictures of Swiss scenery, symmetrically hung upon the gray-toned walls of the dining-room. Not a single guest was bored; in fact, I never yet knew a man who was sad during his digestion of a good dinner. We like at such moments to remain in quietude, a species of middle ground between the revery of a thinker and the comfort of the ruminating animals; a condition which we may call the material melancholy of gastronomy.

So the guests now turned spontaneously to the excellent German, delighted to have a tale to listen to, even though it might prove of no interest. During this blessed interregnum the voice of a narrator is always delightful to our languid senses; it increases their negative happiness. I, a seeker after impressions, admired the faces about me, enlivened by smiles, beaming in the light of the wax candles, and somewhat flushed by our late good cheer; their diverse expressions producing piquant effects seen among the

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porcelain baskets, the fruits, the glasses, and the candelabra.

All of a sudden my imagination was caught by the aspect of a guest who sat directly in front of me. He was a man of medium height, rather fat and smiling, having the air and manner of a stock-broker, and apparently endowed with a very ordinary mind. Hitherto I had scarcely noticed him, but now his face, possibly darkened by a change in the lights, seemed to me to have altered its character; it had certainly grown ghastly; violet tones were spreading over it; you might have thought it the cadaverous head of a dying man. Motionless as the personages painted on a diorama, his stupefied eyes were fixed on the sparkling facets of a cut-glass stopper, but certainly without observing them; he seemed to be ingulfed in some weird contemplation of the future or the past. When I had long examined that puzzling face I began to reflect about it. "Is he ill?" I said to myself. "Has he drunk too much wine? Is he ruined by a drop in the Funds? Is he thinking how to cheat his creditors?"

"Look!" I said to my neighbor, pointing out to her the face of the unknown man, "is that an embryo bankrupt?"

"Oh, no!" she answered, "he would be much gayer." Then, nodding her head gracefully, she added, "If that man ever ruins himself I'll tell it in Pekin! He possesses a million in real estate. That 's a former purveyor to the imperial armies; a good sort of man, and rather original. He married a second time by way of speculation: but for all that he makes his wife ex-

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tremely happy. He has a pretty daughter, whom he refused for many years to recognize; but the death of his son, unfortunately killed in a duel, has compelled him to take her home, for he could not otherwise have children. The poor girl has suddenly become one of the richest heiresses in Paris. The death of his son threw the poor man into an agony of grief, which sometimes reappears on the surface."

At that instant the late purveyor raised his eyes and rested them upon me; that glance made me quiver, so full was it of gloomy thought. Assuredly, a lifetime was contained in it. But suddenly his face grew lively; he picked up the cut-glass stopper and put it, with a mechanical movement, into a decanter full of water that was near his plate, and then he turned to Monsieur Hermann and smiled. After all, that man, now beatified by gastronomical enjoyments, had n't probably two ideas in his brain, and was thinking of nothing. Consequently I felt rather ashamed of wasting my powers of divination *in animâ vili*, — of a doltish financier.

While I was thus making, at a dead loss, these phrenological observations, the worthy German had lined his nose with a good pinch of snuff and was now beginning his tale. It would be difficult to reproduce it in his own language, with his frequent interruptions and wordy digressions. Therefore, I now write it down in my own way; leaving out the faults of the Nuremburger, and taking only what his tale may have had of interest and poesy with the coolness of writers who forget to put on the title pages of their books: *Translated from the German.*

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THOUGHT AND ACT.

TOWARD the end of Vendémiaire, year VII., a republican period which in the present day corresponds to October 20, 1799, two young men, leaving Bonn in the early morning, had reached by nightfall the environs of Andernach, a small town standing on the left bank of the Rhine a few leagues from Coblentz. At that time the French army, commanded by Augereau, was manœuvring before the Austrians, who then occupied the right bank of the river. The headquarters of the Republican division was at Coblentz, and one of the demi-brigades belonging to Augereau's corps was stationed at Andernach.

The two travellers were Frenchmen. At sight of their uniforms, blue mixed with white and faced with red velvet, their sabres, and above all their hats covered with a green varnished-cloth and adorned with a tricolor plume, even the German peasants had recognized army surgeons, a body of men of science and merit liked, for the most part, not only in our own army but also in the countries invaded by our troops. At this period many sons of good families taken from their medical studies by the recent conscription law due to General Jourdan, had naturally preferred to continue their studies on the battle-field rather than be restricted to mere military duty, little in keeping with their early education and their peaceful destinies. Men of science, pacific yet useful, these young men did an actual good in the midst of so much misery, and formed a bond of sympathy with other men of science

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in the various countries through which the cruel civilization of the Republic passed.

The two young men were each provided with a pass and a commission as assistant-surgeon signed Coste and Bernadotte; and they were on their way to join the demi-brigade to which they were attached. Both belonged to moderately rich families in Beauvais, a town in which the gentle manners and loyalty of the provinces are transmitted as a species of birthright. Attracted to the theatre of war before the date at which they were required to begin their functions, they had travelled by diligence to Strasburg. Though maternal prudence had only allowed them a slender sum of money they thought themselves rich in possessing a few louis, an actual treasure in those days when assignats were reaching their lowest depreciation and gold was worth far more than silver. The two young surgeons, about twenty years of age at the most, yielded themselves up to the poesy of their situation with all the enthusiasm of youth. Between Strasburg and Bonn they had visited the Electorate and the banks of the Rhine as artists, philosophers, and observers. When a man's destiny is scientific he is, at their age, a being who is truly many-sided. Even in making love or in travelling, an assistant-surgeon should be gathering up the rudiments of his fortune or his coming fame.

The two young men had therefore given themselves wholly to that deep admiration which must affect all educated men on seeing the banks of the Rhine and the scenery of Suabia between Mayenne and Cologne, — a strong, rich, vigorously varied nature, filled with

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feudal memories, ever fresh and verdant, yet retaining at all points the imprints of fire and sword. Louis XIV. and Turenne have cauterized that beautiful land. Here and there certain ruins bear witness to the pride or rather the foresight of the King of Versailles, who caused to be pulled down the ancient castles that once adorned this part of Germany. Looking at this marvellous country, covered with forests, where the picturesque charm of the middle ages abounds, though in ruins, we are able to conceive the German genius, its revery, its mysticism.

The stay of the two friends at Bonn had the double purpose of science and pleasure. The grand hospital of the Gallo-Batavian army and of Augereau's division was established in the very palace of the Elector. These assistant-surgeons of recent date went there to see old comrades, to present their letters of recommendation to their medical chiefs, and to familiarize themselves with the first aspects of their profession. There, as elsewhere, they got rid of a few prejudices to which we cling so fondly in favor of the beauties of our native land. Surprised by the aspect of the columns of marble which adorn the Electoral Palace, they went about admiring the grandiose effects of German architecture, and finding everywhere new treasures both modern and antique.

From time to time the highways along which the two friends rode at leisure on their way to Andernach, led them over the crest of some granite hill that was higher than the rest. Thence, through a clearing of the forest or cleft in the rocky barrier, they caught sudden glimpses of the Rhine framed in stone or fes-

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tooned with vigorous vegetation. The valleys, the forest paths, the trees exhaled that autumnal odor which induces to revery; the wooded summits were beginning to gild and to take on the warm brown tones significant of age; the leaves were falling, but the skies were still azure and the dry roads lay like yellow lines along the landscape, just then illuminated by the oblique rays of the setting sun. At a mile and a half from Andernach the two friends walked their horses in silence, as if no war were devastating this beautiful land, while they followed a path made for the goats across the lofty walls of bluish granite between which foams the Rhine. Presently they descended by one of the declivities of the gorge, at the foot of which is placed the little town, seated coquettishly on the banks of the river and offering a convenient port to mariners.

"Germany is a beautiful country!" cried one of the two young men, who was named Prosper Magnan, at the moment when he caught sight of the painted houses of Andernach, pressed together like eggs in a basket, and separated only by trees, gardens, and flowers. Then he admired for a moment the pointed roofs with their projecting eaves, the wooden staircases, the galleries of a thousand peaceful dwellings, and the vessels swaying to the waves in the port.

[At the moment when Monsieur Hermann uttered the name of Prosper Magnan, my opposite neighbor seized the decanter, poured out a glass of water, and emptied it at a draught. This movement having attracted my attention, I thought I noticed a slight trembling of the hand and a moisture on the brow of the capitalist.

"What is that man's name?" I asked my neighbor.

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"Taillefer," she replied.

"Do you feel ill?" I said to him, observing that this strange personage was turning pale.

"Not at all," he said with a polite gesture of thanks. "I am listening," he added, with a nod to the guests, who were all simultaneously looking at him.

"I have forgotten," said Monsieur Hermann, "the name of the other young man. But the confidences which Prosper Magnan subsequently made to me enabled me to know that his companion was dark, rather thin, and jovial. I will, if you please, call him Wilhelm, to give greater clearness to the tale I am about to tell you."

The worthy German resumed his narrative after having, without the smallest regard for romanticism and local color, baptized the young French surgeon with a Teutonic name.]

By the time the two young men reached Andernach the night was dark. Presuming that they would lose much time in looking for their chiefs and obtaining from them a military billet in a town already full of soldiers, they resolved to spend their last night of freedom at an inn standing some two or three hundred feet from Andernach, the rich color of which, embellished by the fires of the setting sun, they had greatly admired from the summit of the hill above the town. Painted entirely red, this inn produced a most piquant effect in the landscape, whether by detaching itself from the general background of the town, or by contrasting its scarlet sides with the verdure of the surrounding foliage, and the gray-blue tints of the water. This house owed its name, the Red Inn, to

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this external decoration, imposed upon it, no doubt from time immemorial by the caprice of its founder. A mercantile superstition, natural enough to the different possessors of the building, far-famed among the sailors of the Rhine, had made them scrupulous to preserve the title.

Hearing the sound of horses' hoofs, the master of the Red Inn came out upon the threshold of his door.

"By heavens! gentlemen," he cried, "a little later and you 'd have had to sleep beneath the stars, like a good many more of your compatriots who are bivouacking on the other side of Andernach. Here every room is occupied. If you want to sleep in a good bed I have only my own room to offer you. As for your horses I can litter them down in a corner of the court-yard. The stable is full of people. Do these gentlemen come from France?" he added after a slight pause.

"From Bonn," cried Prosper, "and we have eaten nothing since morning."

"Oh! as to provisions," said the innkeeper, nodding his head, "people come to the Red Inn for their wedding feast from thirty miles round. You shall have a princely meal, a Rhine fish! More, I need not say."

After confiding their weary steeds to the care of the landlord, who vainly called to his hostler, the two young men entered the public room of the inn. Thick white clouds exhaled by a numerous company of smokers prevented them from at first recognizing the persons with whom they were thrown; but after sitting awhile near the table, with the patience practised by

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philosophical travellers who know the inutility of making a fuss, they distinguished through the vapors of tobacco the inevitable accessories of a German inn: the stove, the clock, the pots of beer, the long pipes, and here and there the eccentric physiognomies of Jews, or Germans, and the weather-beaten faces of mariners. The epaulets of several French officers were glittering through the mist, and the clank of spurs and sabres echoed incessantly from the brick floor. Some were playing cards, others argued, or held their tongues and ate, drank, or walked about. One stout little woman, wearing a black velvet cap, blue and silver stomacher, pincushion, bunch of keys, silver buckles, braided hair, — all distinctive signs of the mistress of a German inn (a costume which has been so often depicted in colored prints that it is too common to describe here), — well, this wife of the innkeeper kept the two friends alternately patient and impatient with remarkable ability.

Little by little the noise decreased, the various travellers retired to their rooms, the clouds of smoke dispersed. When places were set for the two young men, and the classic carp of the Rhine appeared upon the table, eleven o'clock was striking and the room was empty. The silence of night enabled the young surgeons to hear vaguely the noise their horses made in eating their provender, and the murmur of the waters of the Rhine, together with those indefinable sounds which always enliven an inn when filled with persons preparing to go to bed. Doors and windows are opened and shut, voices murmur vague words, and a few interpellations echo along the passages.

At this moment of silence and tumult the two

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Frenchmen and their landlord, who was boasting of Andernach, his inn, his cookery, the Rhine wines, the Republican army, and his wife, were all three listening with a sort of interest to the hoarse cries of sailors in a boat which appeared to be coming to the wharf. The innkeeper, familiar no doubt with the guttural shouts of the boatmen, went out hastily, but presently returned conducting a short stout man, behind whom walked two sailors carrying a heavy valise and several packages. When these were deposited in the room, the short man took the valise and placed it beside him as he seated himself without ceremony at the same table as the surgeons.

"Go and sleep in your boat," he said to the boatmen, "as the inn is full. Considering all things, that is best."

"Monsieur," said the landlord to the new-comer, "these are all the provisions I have left," pointing to the supper served to the two Frenchmen; "I have n't so much as another crust of bread nor a bone."

"No sauer-kraut?"

"Not enough to put in my wife's thimble! As I had the honor to tell you just now, you can have no bed but the chair on which you are sitting, and no other chamber than this public room."

At these words the little man cast upon the landlord, the room, and the two Frenchmen a look in which caution and alarm were equally expressed.

["Here," said Monsieur Hermann, interrupting himself, "I ought to tell you that we have never known the real name nor the history of this man; his papers showed that he came from Aix-la-Chapelle; he called

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himself Wahlenfer and said that he owned a rather extensive pin manufactory in the suburbs of Neuwied. Like all the manufacturers of that region, he wore a surtout coat of common cloth, waistcoat and breeches of dark green velveteen, stout boots, and a broad leather belt. His face was round, his manners frank and cordial; but during the evening he seemed unable to disguise altogether some secret apprehension or, possibly, some anxious care. The innkeeper's opinion has always been that this German merchant was fleeing his country. Later I heard that his manufactory had been burned by one of those unfortunate chances so frequent in times of war. In spite of its anxious expression the man's face showed great kindliness. His features were handsome; and the whiteness of his stout throat was well set off by a black cravat, a fact which Wilhelm showed jestingly to Prosper."

Here Monsieur Taillefer drank another glass of water.]

Prosper courteously proposed that the merchant should share their supper, and Wahlenfer accepted the offer without ceremony, like a man who feels himself able to return a civility. He placed his valise on the floor and put his feet on it, took off his hat and gloves and removed a pair of pistols from his belt; the landlord having by this time set a knife and fork for him, the three guests began to satisfy their appetites in silence. The atmosphere of the room was hot and the flies were so numerous that Prosper requested the landlord to open the window looking toward the outer gate, so as to change the air. This window was barricaded by an iron bar, the two ends of which were inserted

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into holes made in the window casings. For greater security, two bolts were screwed to each shutter. Prosper accidentally noticed the manner in which the landlord managed these obstacles and opened the window.

As I am now speaking of localities, this is the place to describe to you the interior arrangements of the inn; for, on an accurate knowledge of the premises depends an understanding of my tale. The public room in which the three persons I have named to you were sitting, had two outer doors. One opened on the main road to Andernach, which skirts the Rhine. In front of the inn was a little wharf, to which the boat hired by the merchant for his journey was moored. The other door opened upon the courtyard of the inn. This courtyard was surrounded by very high walls and was full, for the time being, of cattle and horses, the stables being occupied by human beings. The great gate leading into this courtyard had been so carefully barricaded that to save time the landlord had brought the merchant and sailors into the public room through the door opening on the roadway. After having opened the window, as requested by Prosper Magnan, he closed this door, slipped the iron bars into their places and ran the bolts. The landlord's room, where the two young surgeons were to sleep, adjoined the public room, and was separated by a somewhat thin partition from the kitchen, where the landlord and his wife intended, probably, to pass the night. The servant-woman had left the premises to find a lodging in some crib or hayloft. It is therefore easy to see that the kitchen, the landlord's

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chamber, and the public room were, to some extent, isolated from the rest of the house. In the courtyard were two large dogs, whose deep-toned barking showed vigilant and easily roused guardians.

"What silence! and what a beautiful night!" said Wilhelm, looking at the sky through the window, as the landlord was fastening the door.

The lapping of the river against the wharf was the only sound to be heard.

"Messieurs," said the merchant, "permit me to offer you a few bottles of wine to wash down the carp. We'll ease the fatigues of the day by drinking. From your manner and the state of your clothes, I judge that you have made, like me, a good bit of a journey to-day."

The two friends accepted, and the landlord went out by a door through the kitchen to his cellar, situated, no doubt, under this portion of the building. When five venerable bottles which he presently brought back with him appeared on the table, the wife brought in the rest of the supper. She gave to the dishes and to the room generally the glance of a mistress, and then, sure of having attended to all the wants of the travellers, she returned to the kitchen.

The four men, for the landlord was invited to drink, did not hear her go to bed, but later, during the intervals of silence which came into their talk, certain strongly accentuated snores, made the more sonorous by the thin planks of the loft in which she had ensconced herself, made the guests laugh and also the husband. Towards midnight, when nothing remained on the table but biscuits, cheese, dried fruit, and good

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wine, the guests, chiefly the young Frenchmen, became communicative. The latter talked of their homes, their studies, and of the war. The conversation grew lively. Prosper Magnan brought a few tears to the merchant's eyes, when with the frankness and naïveté of a good and tender nature, he talked of what his mother must be doing at that hour, while he was sitting drinking on the banks of the Rhine.

"I can see her," he said, "reading her prayers before she goes to bed. She won't forget me; she is certain to say to herself, 'My poor Prosper; I wonder where he is now!' If she has won a few sous from her neighbors — your mother, perhaps," he added, nudging Wilhelm's elbow — "she 'll go and put them in the great red earthenware pot, where she is accumulating a sum sufficient to buy the thirty acres adjoining her little estate at Lescheville. Those thirty acres are worth at least sixty thousand francs. Such fine fields! Ah! if I had them I 'd live all my days at Lescheville, without other ambition! How my father used to long for those thirty acres and the pretty brook which winds through the meadows! But he died without ever being able to buy them. Many 's the time I've played there!"

"Monsieur Wahlenfer, have n't you also your *hoc erat in votis?*" asked Wilhelm.

"Yes, monsieur, but it came to pass, and now —"

The good man was silent, and did not finish his sentence.

"As for me," said the landlord, whose face was rather flushed, "I bought a field last spring, which I had been wanting for ten years."

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They talked thus like men whose tongues are loosened by wine, and they each took that friendly liking to the others of which we are never stingy on a journey; so that when the time came to separate for the night, Wilhelm offered his bed to the merchant.

"You can accept it without hesitation," he said, "for I can sleep with Prosper. It won't be the first, nor the last time either. You are our elder, and we ought to honor age!"

"Bah!" said the landlord, "my wife's bed has several mattresses; take one off and put it on the floor."

So saying, he went and shut the window, making all the noise that prudent operation demanded.

"I accept," said the merchant; "in fact I will admit," he added, lowering his voice and looking at the two Frenchmen, "that I desired it. My boatmen seem to me suspicious. I am not sorry to spend the night with two brave young men, two French soldiers, for, between ourselves, I have a hundred thousand francs in gold and diamonds in my valise."

The friendly caution with which this imprudent confidence was received by the two young men, seemed to reassure the German. The landlord assisted in taking off one of the mattresses, and when all was arranged for the best he bade them good-night and went off to bed.

The merchant and the surgeons laughed over the nature of their pillows. Prosper put his case of surgical instruments and that of Wilhelm under the end of his mattress to raise it and supply the place of a bolster, which was lacking. Wahlenfer, as a measure of precaution, put his valise under his pillow.

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"We shall both sleep on our fortune," said Prosper, "you, on your gold; I, on my instruments. It remains to be seen whether my instruments will ever bring me the gold you have now acquired."

"You may hope so," said the merchant. "Work and honesty can do everything; have patience, however."

Wahlenfer and Wilhelm were soon asleep. Whether it was that his bed on the floor was hard, or that his great fatigue was a cause of sleeplessness, or that some fatal influence affected his soul, it is certain that Prosper Magnan continued awake. His thoughts unconsciously took an evil turn. His mind dwelt exclusively on the hundred thousand francs which lay beneath the merchant's pillow. To Prosper Magnan one hundred thousand francs was a vast and ready-made fortune. He began to employ it in a hundred different ways; he made castles in the air, such as we all make with eager delight during the moments preceding sleep, an hour when images rise in our minds confusedly, and often, in the silence of the night, thought acquires some magical power. He gratified his mother's wishes; he bought the thirty acres of meadow land; he married a young lady of Beauvais to whom his present want of fortune forbade him to aspire. With a hundred thousand francs he planned a lifetime of happiness; he saw himself prosperous, the father of a family, rich, respected in his province, and, possibly, mayor of Beauvais. His brain heated; he searched for means to turn his fictions to realities. He began with extraordinary ardor to plan a crime theoretically. While fancying the death of the merchant he saw dis-

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tinctly the gold and the diamonds. His eyes were dazzled by them. His heart throbbed. Deliberation was, undoubtedly, already crime. Fascinated by that mass of gold he intoxicated himself morally by murderous arguments. He asked himself if that poor German had any need to live; he supposed the case of his never having existed. In short, he planned the crime in a manner to secure himself impunity. The other bank of the river was occupied by the Austrian army; below the windows lay a boat and boatman; he would cut the throat of that man, throw the body into the Rhine, and escape with the valise; gold would buy the boatman and he could reach the Austrians. He went so far as to calculate the professional ability he had reached in the use of instruments, so as to cut through his victim's throat without leaving him the chance for a single cry.

[Here Monsieur Taillefer wiped his forehead and drank a little water.]

Prosper rose slowly, making no noise. Certain of having waked no one, he dressed himself and went into the public room. There, with that fatal intelligence a man suddenly finds on some occasions within him, with that power of tact and will which is never lacking to prisoners or to criminals in whatever they undertake, he unscrewed the iron bars, slipped them from their places without the slightest noise, placed them against the wall, and opened the shutters, leaning heavily upon their hinges to keep them from creaking. The moon was shedding its pale pure light upon the scene, and he was thus enabled to faintly see into the room where Wilhelm and Wahlenfer were sleeping.

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There, he told me, he stood still for a moment. The throbbing of his heart was so strong, so deep, so sonorous, that he was terrified; he feared he could not act with coolness; his hands trembled; the soles of his feet seem planted on red-hot coal; but the execution of his plan was accompanied by such apparent good luck that he fancied he saw a species of predestination in this favor bestowed upon him by fate. He opened the window, returned to the bedroom, took his case of instruments, and selected the one most suitable to accomplish the crime.

"When I stood by the bed," he said to me, "I commended myself mechanically to God."

At the moment when he raised his arm collecting all his strength, he heard a voice as it were within him; he thought he saw a light. He flung the instrument on his own bed and fled into the next room, and stood before the window. There, he conceived the utmost horror of himself. Feeling his virtue weak, fearing still to succumb to the spell that was upon him he sprang out upon the road and walked along the bank of the Rhine, pacing up and down like a sentinel before the inn. Sometimes he went as far as Andernach in his hurried tramp; often his feet led him up the slope he had descended on his way to the inn; and sometimes he lost sight of the inn and the window he had left open behind him. His object, he said, was to weary himself and so find sleep.

But, as he walked beneath the cloudless skies, beholding the stars, affected perhaps by the purer air of night and the melancholy lapping of the water, he fell into a revery which brought him back by degrees to

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sane moral thoughts. Reason at last dispersed completely his momentary frenzy. The teachings of his education, its religious precepts, but above all, so he told me, the remembrance of his simple life beneath the parental roof drove out his wicked thoughts. When he returned to the inn after a long meditation to which he abandoned himself on the bank of the Rhine, resting his elbow on a rock, he could, he said to me, not have slept, but have watched untempted beside millions of gold. At the moment when his virtue rose proudly and vigorously from the struggle, he knelt down, with a feeling of ecstasy and happiness, and thanked God. He felt happy, light-hearted, content, as on the day of his first communion, when he thought himself worthy of the angels because he had passed one day without sinning in thought, or word, or deed.

He returned to the inn and closed the window without fearing to make a noise, and went to bed at once. His moral and physical lassitude was certain to bring him sleep. In a very short time after laying his head on his mattress, he fell into that first fantastic somnolence which precedes the deepest sleep. The senses then grow numb, and life is abolished by degrees; thoughts are incomplete, and the last quivering of our consciousness seems like a sort of revery. "How heavy the air is!" he thought; "I seem to be breathing a moist vapor." He explained this vaguely to himself by the difference which must exist between the atmosphere of the close room and the purer air by the river. But presently he heard a periodical noise, something like that made by drops of water falling from a robinet into a fountain. Obeying a feeling of panic terror he

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was about to rise and call the innkeeper and waken Wahlenfer and Wilhelm, but he suddenly remembered, alas! to his great misfortune, the tall wooden clock; he fancied the sound was that of the pendulum, and he fell asleep with that confused and indistinct perception.

["Do you want some water, Monsieur Taillefer?" said the master of the house, observing that the banker was mechanically pouring from an empty decanter.

Monsieur Hermann continued his narrative after the slight pause occasioned by this interruption.]

The next morning Prosper Magnan was awakened by a great noise. He seemed to hear piercing cries, and he felt that violent shuddering of the nerves which we suffer when on awaking we continue to feel a painful impression begun in sleep. A physiological fact then takes place within us, a start, to use the common expression, which has never been sufficiently observed, though it contains very curious phenomena for science. This terrible agony, produced, possibly, by the too sudden reunion of our two natures separated during sleep, is usually transient; but in the poor young surgeon's case it lasted, and even increased, causing him suddenly the most awful horror as he beheld a pool of blood between Wahlenfer's bed and his own mattress. The head of the unfortunate German lay on the ground; his body was still on the bed; all its blood had flowed out by the neck.

Seeing the eyes still open but fixed, seeing the blood which had stained his sheets and even his hands, recognizing his own surgical instrument beside him, Prosper Magnan fainted and fell into the pool of

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Wahlenfer's blood. "It was," he said to me, "the punishment of my thoughts." When he recovered consciousness he was in the public room, seated on a chair, surrounded by French soldiers, and in presence of a curious and observing crowd. He gazed stupidly at a Republican officer engaged in taking the testimony of several witnesses, and in writing down, no doubt, the *procès-verbal.* He recognized the landlord, his wife, the two boatmen, and the servant of the Red Inn. The surgical instrument which the murderer had used —

[Here Monsieur Taillefer coughed, drew out his handkerchief to blow his nose, and wiped his forehead. These perfectly natural motions were noticed by me only; the other guests sat with their eyes fixed on Monsieur Hermann, to whom they were listening with a sort of avidity. The purveyor leaned his elbow on the table, put his head into his right hand and gazed fixedly at Hermann. From that moment he showed no other sign of emotion or interest, but his face remained passive and ghastly, as it was when I first saw him playing with the stopper of the decanter.]

The surgical instrument which the murderer had used was on the table with the case containing the rest of the instruments, together with Prosper's purse and papers. The gaze of the assembled crowd turned alternately from these convicting articles to the young man, who seemed to be dying and whose half-extinguished eyes apparently saw nothing. A confused murmur which was heard without proved the presence of a crowd, drawn to the neighborhood of the inn by

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the news of the crime, and also perhaps by a desire to see the murderer. The step of the sentries placed beneath the windows of the public room and the rattle of their accoutrements could be heard above the talk of the populace; but the inn was closed and the court-yard was empty and silent.

Incapable of sustaining the glance of the officer who was gathering the testimony, Prosper Magnan suddenly felt his hand pressed by a man, and he raised his eyes to see who his protector could be in that crowd of enemies. He recognized by his uniform the surgeon-major of the demi-brigade then stationed at Andernach. The glance of that man was so piercing, so stern, that the poor young fellow shuddered, and suffered his head to fall on the back of his chair. A soldier put vinegar to his nostrils and he recovered consciousness. Nevertheless his haggard eyes were so devoid of life and intelligence that the surgeon said to the officer after feeling Prosper's pulse, —

"Captain, it is impossible to question the man at this moment."

"Very well! Take him away," replied the captain, interrupting the surgeon, and addressing a corporal who stood behind the prisoner. "You cursed coward!" he went on, speaking to Prosper in a low voice, "try at least to walk firmly before these German curs, and save the honor of the Republic."

This address seemed to wake up Prosper Magnan, who rose and made a few steps forward; but when the door was opened and he felt the fresh air and saw the crowd before him, he staggered and his knees gave way under him.

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"This coward of a sawbones deserves a dozen deaths! Get on!" cried the two soldiers who had him in charge, lending him their arms to support him.

"There he is! — oh, the villain! the coward! Here he is! There he is!"

These cries seemed to be uttered by a single voice, the tumultuous voice of the crowd which followed him with insults and swelled at every step. During the passage from the inn to the prison, the noise made by the tramping of the crowd and the soldiers, the murmur of the various colloquies, the sight of the sky, the coolness of the air, the aspect of Andernach and the shimmering of the waters of the Rhine, — these impressions came to the soul of the young man vaguely, confusedly, torpidly, like all the sensations he had felt since his waking. There were moments, he said, when he thought he was no longer living.

I was then in prison. Enthusiastic, as we all are at twenty years of age, I wished to defend my country, and I commanded a company of free lances, which I had organized in the vicinity of Andernach. A few days before these events I had fallen plump, during the night, into a French detachment of eight hundred men. We were two hundred at the most. My scouts had sold me. I was thrown into the prison of Andernach, and they talked of shooting me, as a warning to intimidate others. The French talked also of reprisals. My father, however, obtained a reprieve for three days to give him time to see Général Augereau, whom he knew, and ask for my pardon, which was granted. Thus it happened that I saw Prosper Magnan when he was brought to the prison. He

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inspired me with the profoundest pity. Though pale, distracted, and covered with blood, his whole countenance had a character of truth and innocence which struck me forcibly. To me his long fair hair and clear blue eyes seemed German. A true image of my hapless country, I felt he was a victim and not a murderer. At the moment when he passed beneath my window he chanced to cast about him the painful, melancholy smile of an insane man who suddenly recovers for a time a fleeting gleam of reason. That smile was assuredly not the smile of a murderer. When I saw the jailer I questioned him about his new prisoner.

"He has not spoken since I put him in his cell," answered the man. "He is sitting down with his head in his hands and is either sleeping or reflecting about his crime. The French say he 'll get his reckoning to-morrow morning and be shot in twenty-four hours."

That evening I stopped under the window of the prison during the short time I was allowed to take exercise in the prison yard. We talked together, and he frankly related to me his strange affair, replying with evident truthfulness to my various questions. After that first conversation I no longer doubted his innocence; I asked, and obtained the favor of staying several hours with him. I saw him again at intervals, and the poor lad let me in without concealment to all his thoughts. He believed himself both innocent and guilty. Remembering the horrible temptation which he had had the strength to resist, he feared he might have done in sleep, in a fit of somnambulism, the crime he had dreamed of awake.

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"But your companion?" I said to him.

"Oh!" he cried eagerly. "Wilhelm is incapable of —"

He did not even finish his sentence. At that warm defence, so full of youth and manly virtue, I pressed his hand.

"When he woke," continued Prosper, "he must have been terrified and lost his head; no doubt he fled."

"Without awaking you?" I said. "Then surely your defence is easy; Walhenfer's valise cannot have been stolen."

Suddenly he burst into tears.

"Oh, yes!" he cried, "I am innocent! I have not killed a man! I remember my dreams. I was playing at base with my schoolmates. I could n't have cut off the head of a man while I dreamed I was running."

Then, in spite of these gleams of hope, which gave him at times some calmness, he felt a remorse which crushed him. He had, beyond all question, raised his arm to kill that man. He judged himself; and he felt that his heart was not innocent after committing that crime in his mind.

"And yet, I *am* good!" he cried. "Oh, my poor mother! Perhaps at this moment she is cheerfully playing boston with the neighbors in her little tapestry salon. If she knew that I had raised my hand to murder a man — oh! she would die of it! And I *am* in prison, accused of committing that crime! If I have not killed a man, I have certainly killed my mother!"

Saying these words he wept no longer; he was seized by that short and rapid madness known to the men of Picardy; he sprang to the wall, and if I had not caught him, he would have dashed out his brains against it.

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"Wait for your trial," I said. "You are innocent, you will certainly be acquitted; think of your mother."

"My mother!" he cried frantically, "she will hear of the accusation before she hears anything else, — it is always so in little towns; and the shock will kill her. Besides, I am not innocent. Must I tell you the whole truth? I feel that I have lost the virginity of my conscience."

After that terrible avowal he sat down, crossed his arms on his breast, bowed his head upon it, gazing gloomily on the ground. At this instant the turnkey came to ask me to return to my room. Grieved to leave my companion at a moment when his discouragement was so deep, I pressed him in my arms with friendship, saying: —

"Have patience; all may yet go well. If the voice of an honest man can still your doubts, believe that I esteem you and trust you. Accept my friendship, and rest upon my heart, if you cannot find peace in your own."

The next morning a corporal's guard came to fetch the young surgeon at nine o'clock. Hearing the noise made by the soldiers, I stationed myself at my window. As the prisoner crossed the courtyard, he cast his eyes up to me. Never shall I forget that look, full of thoughts, presentiments, resignation, and I know not what sad, melancholy grace. It was, as it were, a silent but intelligible last will by which a man bequeathed his lost existence to his only friend. The night must have been very hard, very solitary for him; and yet, perhaps, the pallor of his face expressed a stoicism gathered from some new sense of self-respect.

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Perhaps he felt that his remorse had purified him, and believed that he had blotted out his fault by his anguish and his shame. He now walked with a firm step, and since the previous evening he had washed away the blood with which he was, involuntarily, stained.

"My hands must have dabbled in it while I slept, for I am always a restless sleeper," he had said to me in tones of horrible despair.

I learned that he was on his way to appear before the council of war. The division was to march on the following morning, and the commanding-officer did not wish to leave Andernach without inquiry into the crime on the spot where it had been committed. I remained in the utmost anxiety during the time the council lasted. At last, about mid-day, Prosper Magnan was brought back. I was then taking my usual walk; he saw me, and came and threw himself into my arms.

"Lost!" he said, "lost, without hope! Here, to all the world, I am a murderer." He raised his head proudly. "This injustice restores to me my innocence. My life would always have been wretched; my death leaves me without reproach. But is there a future?"

The whole eighteenth century was in that sudden question. He remained thoughtful.

"Tell me," I said to him, "how you answered. What did they ask you? Did you not relate the simple facts as you told them to me?"

He looked at me fixedly for a moment; then, after that awful pause, he answered with feverish excitement:—

"First they asked me, 'Did you leave the inn during the night?' I said, 'Yes.' 'How?' I answered, 'By the

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window.' 'Then you must have taken great precautions; the innkeeper heard no noise.' I was stupefied. The sailors said they saw me walking, first to Andernach, then to the forest. I made many trips, they said, no doubt to bury the gold and diamonds. The valise had not been found. My remorse still held me dumb. When I wanted to speak, a pitiless voice cried out to me, '*You meant to commit that crime!*' All was against me, even myself. They asked me about my comrade, and I completely exonerated him. Then they said to me: 'The crime must lie between you, your comrade, the innkeeper, and his wife. This morning all the windows and doors were found securely fastened. At those words,' continued the poor fellow, 'I had neither voice, nor strength, nor soul to answer. More sure of my comrade than I could be of myself, I could not accuse him. I saw that we were both thought equally guilty of the murder, and that I was considered the most clumsy. I tried to explain the crime by somnambulism, and so protect my friend; but there I rambled and contradicted myself. No, I am lost. I read my condemnation in the eyes of my judges. They smiled incredulously. All is over. No more uncertainty. To-morrow I shall be shot. I am not thinking of myself," he went on after a pause, "but of my poor mother." Then he stopped, looked up to heaven, and shed no tears; his eyes were dry and strongly convulsed. "Frédéric —"

["Ah! true," cried Monsieur Hermann, with an air of triumph. "Yes, the other's name was Frédéric, Frédéric! I remember now!"

My neighbor touched my foot, and made me a sign

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to look at Monsieur Taillefer. The former purveyor had negligently dropped his hand over his eyes, but between the interstices of his fingers we thought we caught a darkling flame proceeding from them.

"Hein?" she said in my ear, "what if his name were Frédéric?"

I answered with a glance, which said to her: "Silence!"

Hermann continued:]

"Frédéric!" cried the young surgeon, "Frédéric basely deserted me. He must have been afraid. Perhaps he is still hidden in the inn, for our horses were both in the courtyard this morning. What an incomprehensible mystery!" he went on, after a moment's silence. "Somnambulism! somnambulism? I never had but one attack in my life, and that was when I was six years old. Must I go from this earth," he cried, striking the ground with his foot, "carrying with me all there is of friendship in the world? Shall I die a double death, doubting a fraternal love begun when we were only five years old, and continued through school and college? Where is Frédéric?"

He wept. Can it be that we cling more to a sentiment than to life?

"Let us go in," he said; "I prefer to be in my cell. I do not wish to be seen weeping. I shall go courageously to death, but I cannot play the heroic at all moments; I own I regret my beautiful young life. All last night I could not sleep; I remembered the scenes of my childhood; I fancied I was running in the fields. Ah! I had a future," he said, suddenly interrupting himself; "and now, twelve men, a sub-lieutenant shouting

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'Carry-arms, aim, fire!' a roll of drums, and infamy! that 's my future now. Oh! there must be a God, or it would all be too senseless."

Then he took me in his arms and pressed me to him with all his strength.

"You are the last man, the last friend to whom I can show my soul. You will be set at liberty, you will see your mother! I don't know whether you are rich or poor, but no matter! you are all the world to me. They won't fight always, *ceux-ci*. Well, when there 's peace, will you go to Beauvais? If my mother has survived the fatal news of my death, you will find her there. Say to her the comforting words, 'He was innocent!' She will believe you. I am going to write to her; but you must take her my last look; you must tell her that you were the last man whose hand I pressed. Oh, she 'll love you, the poor woman! you, my last friend. Here," he said after a moment's silence, during which he was overcome by the weight of his recollections, "all, officers and soldiers, are unknown to me; I am an object of horror to them. If it were not for you my innocence would be a secret between God and myself."

I swore to sacredly fulfil his last wishes. My words, the emotion I showed touched him. Soon after that the soldiers came to take him again before the council of war. He was condemned to death. I am ignorant of the formalities that followed or accompanied this judgment, nor do I know whether the young surgeon defended his life or not; but he expected to be executed on the following day, and he spent the night in writing to his mother.

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"We shall both be free to-day," he said smiling, when I went to see him the next morning. "I am told that the general has signed your pardon."

I was silent, and looked at him closely so as to carve his features, as it were, on my memory. Presently an expression of disgust crossed his face.

"I have been very cowardly," he said. "During all last night I begged for mercy of these walls," and he pointed to the sides of his dungeon. "Yes, yes, I howled with despair, I rebelled, I suffered the most awful moral agony — I was alone! Now I think of what others will say of me. Courage is a garment to put on. I desire to go decently to death, therefore — "

"Oh, stop! stop!" cried the young lady who had asked for this history, interrupting the narrator suddenly. "Say no more; let me remain in uncertainty and believe that he was saved. If I hear now that he was shot I shall not sleep all night. To-morrow you shall tell me the rest."

We rose from table. My neighbor in accepting Monsieur Hermann's arm, said to him, —

"I suppose he was shot, was he not?"

"Yes. I was present at the execution."

"Oh! monsieur," she said, "how could you — "

"He desired it, madame. There was something really dreadful in following the funeral of a living man, a man my heart cared for, an innocent man! The poor young fellow never ceased to look at me. He seemed to live only in me. He wanted, he said, that I should carry to his mother his last sigh."

"And did you?"

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"At the peace of Amiens I went to France, for the purpose of taking to the mother those blessed words, 'He was innocent.' I religiously undertook that pilgrimage. But Madame Magnan had died of consumption. It was not without deep emotion that I burned the letter of which I was the bearer. You will perhaps smile at my German imagination, but I see a drama of sad sublimity in the eternal secrecy which engulfed those parting words cast between two graves, unknown to all creation, like the cry uttered in a desert by some lonely traveller whom a lion seizes."

"And if," I said, interrupting him, "you were brought face to face with a man now in this room, and were told, 'This is the murderer!' would not that be another drama? And what would you do?"

Monsieur Hermann looked for his hat and went away.

"You are behaving like a young man, and very heedlessly," said my neighbor. "Look at Taillefer! — there, seated on that sofa at the corner of the fireplace. Mademoiselle Fanny is offering him a cup of coffee. He smiles. Would a murderer to whom that tale must have been torture, present so calm a face? Is n't his whole air patriarchal?"

"Yes; but go and ask him if he went to the war in Germany," I said.

"Why not?"

And with that audacity which is seldom lacking to women when some action attracts them, or their minds are impelled by curiosity, my neighbor went up to the purveyor.

"Were you ever in Germany?" she asked.

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Taillefer came near dropping his cup and saucer.

"I, madame? No, never."

"What are you talking about, Taillefer;" said our host, interrupting him. "Were not you in the commissariat during the campaign of Wagram?"

"Ah, true!" replied Taillefer, "I was there at that time."

"You are mistaken," said my neighbor, returning to my side; "that's a good man."

"Well," I cried, "before the end of this evening, I will hunt that murderer out of the slough in which he is hiding."

Every day, before our eyes, a moral phenomenon of amazing profundity takes place which is, nevertheless, so simple as never to be noticed. If two men meet in a salon, one of whom has the right to hate or despise the other, whether from a knowledge of some private and latent fact which degrades him, or of a secret condition, or even of a coming revenge, those two men divine each other's souls, and are able to measure the gulf which separates or ought to separate them. They observe each other unconsciously; their minds are preoccupied by themselves; through their looks, their gestures, an indefinable emanation of their thought transpires; there's a magnet between them. I don't know which has the strongest power of attraction, vengeance or crime, hatred or insult. Like a priest who cannot consecrate the host in presence of an evil spirit, each is ill at ease and distrustful; one is polite, the other surly, but I know not which; one colors or turns pale, the other trembles. Often the avenger is as cowardly as the victim. Few men have the courage

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to invoke an evil, even when just or necessary, and men are silent or forgive a wrong from hatred of uproar or fear of some tragic ending.

This introsusception of our souls and our sentiments created a mysterious struggle between Taillefer and myself. Since the first inquiry I had put to him during Monsieur Hermann's narrative, he had steadily avoided my eye. Possibly he avoided those of all the other guests. He talked with the youthful, inexperienced daughter of the banker, feeling, no doubt, like many other criminals, a need of drawing near to innocence, hoping to find rest there. But, though I was a long distance from him, I heard him, and my piercing eye fascinated his. When he thought he could watch me unobserved our eyes met, and his eyelids dropped immediately.

Weary of this torture, Taillefer seemed determined to put an end to it by sitting down at a card-table. I at once went to bet on his adversary; hoping to lose my money. The wish was granted; the player left the table and I took his place, face to face with the murderer.

"Monsieur," I said, while he dealt the cards, "may I ask if you are Monsieur Frédéric Taillefer, whose family I know very well at Beauvais?"

"Yes, monsieur," he answered.

He dropped the cards, turned pale, put his hands to his head and rose, asking one of the bettors to take his hand.

"It is too hot here," he cried; "I fear—"

He did not end the sentence. His face expressed intolerable suffering, and he went out hastily. The

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master of the house followed him and seemed to take an anxious interest in his condition. My neighbor and I looked at each other, but I saw a tinge of bitter sadness or reproach upon her countenance.

"Do you think your conduct is merciful?" she asked, drawing me to the embrasure of a window just as I was leaving the card-table, having lost all my money. "Would you accept the power of reading hearts? Why not leave things to human justice or divine justice? We may escape one but we cannot escape the other. Do you think the privileges of a judge of the court of assizes so much to be envied? You have almost done the work of an executioner."

"After sharing and stimulating my curiosity, why are you now lecturing me on morality?"

"You have made me reflect," she answered.

"So, then, peace to villains, war to the sorrowful, and let's deify gold! However, we will drop the subject," I added, laughing. "Do you see that young girl who is just entering the salon?"

"Yes, what of her?"

"I met her, three days ago, at the ball of the Neapolitan ambassador, and I am passionately in love with her. For pity's sake tell me her name. No one was able —"

"That is Mademoiselle Victorine Taillefer."

I grew dizzy.

"Her step-mother," continued my neighbor, "has lately taken her from a convent, where she was finishing, rather late in the day, her education. For a long time her father refused to recognize her. She comes here for the first time. She is very beautiful and very rich.

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These words were accompanied by a sardonic smile.

At this moment we heard violent, but smothered outcries; they seemed to come from a neighboring apartment and to be echoed faintly back through the garden.

"Is n't that the voice of Monsieur Taillefer?" I said.

We gave our full attention to the noise; a frightful moaning reached our ears. The wife of the banker came hurriedly towards us and closed the window.

"Let us avoid a scene," she said. "If Mademoiselle Taillefer hears her father, she might be thrown into hysterics."

The banker now re-entered the salon, looked round for Victorine, and said a few words in her ear. Instantly the young girl uttered a cry, ran to the door, and disappeared. This event produced a great sensation. The card-players paused. Every one questioned his neighbor. The murmur of voices swelled, and groups gathered.

"Can Monsieur Taillefer be —" I began.

"— dead?" said my sarcastic neighbor. "You would wear the gayest mourning, I fancy!"

"But what has happened to him?"

"The poor dear man," said the mistress of the house, "is subject to attacks of a disease the name of which I never can remember, though Monsieur Brousson has often told it to me; and he has just been seized with one."

"What is the nature of the disease?" asked an examining-judge.

"Oh, it is something terrible, monsieur," she replied.

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"The doctors know no remedy. It causes the most dreadful suffering. One day, while the unfortunate man was staying at my country-house, he had an attack, and I was obliged to go away and stay with a neighbor to avoid hearing him; his cries were terrible; he tried to kill himself; his daughter was obliged to have him put into a strait-jacket and fastened to his bed. The poor man declares there are live animals in his head gnawing his brain; every nerve quivers with horrible shooting pains, and he writhes in torture. He suffers so much in his head that he did not even feel the moxas they used formerly to apply to relieve it; but Monsieur Brousson, who is now his physician, has forbidden that remedy, declaring that the trouble is a nervous affection, an inflammation of the nerves, for which leeches should be applied to the neck, and opium to the head. As a result, the attacks are not so frequent; they appear now only about once a year, and always late in the autumn. When he recovers, Taillefer says repeatedly that he would far rather die than endure such torture."

"Then he must suffer terribly!" said a broker, considered a wit, who was present.

"Oh," continued the mistress of the house, "last year he nearly died in one of these attacks. He had gone alone to his country-house on pressing business. For want, perhaps, of immediate help, he lay twenty-two hours stiff and stark as though he were dead. A very hot bath was all that saved him."

"It must be a species of lockjaw," said one of the guests.

"I don't know," she answered. "He got the

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disease in the army nearly thirty years ago. He says it was caused by a splinter of wood entering his head from a shot on board a boat. Brousson hopes to cure him. They say the English have discovered a mode of treating the disease with prussic acid — "

At that instant a still more piercing cry echoed through the house, and froze us with horror.

"There! that is what I listened to all day long last year," said the banker's wife. "It made me jump in my chair and rasped my nerves dreadfully. But, strange to say, poor Taillefer, though he suffers untold agony, is in no danger of dying. He eats and drinks as well as ever during even short cessations of the pain — nature is so queer! A German doctor told him it was a form of gout in the head, and that agrees with Brousson's opinion.

I left the group around the mistress of the house and went away. On the staircase I met Mademoiselle Taillefer, whom a footman had come to fetch.

"Oh!" she said to me, weeping, "what has my poor father ever done to deserve such suffering? — so kind as he is!"

I accompanied her downstairs and assisted her in getting into the carriage, and there I saw her father bent almost double.

Mademoiselle Taillefer tried to stifle his moans by putting her handkerchief to his mouth; unhappily he saw me; his face became even more distorted, a convulsive cry rent the air, and he gave me a dreadful look as the carriage rolled away.

That dinner, that evening exercised a cruel influence on my life and on my feelings. I loved Mademoiselle

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Taillefer, precisely, perhaps, because honor and decency forbade me to marry the daughter of a murderer, however good a husband and father he might be. A curious fatality impelled me to visit those houses where I knew I could meet Victorine; often, after giving myself my word of honor to renounce the happiness of seeing her, I found myself that same evening beside her. My struggles were great. Legitimate love, full of chimerical remorse, assumed the color of a criminal passion. I despised myself for bowing to Taillefer when, by chance, he accompanied his daughter, but I bowed to him all the same.

Alas! for my misfortune Victorine is not only a pretty girl, she is also educated, intelligent, full of talent and of charm, without the slightest pedantry or the faintest tinge of assumption. She converses with reserve, and her nature has a melancholy grace which no one can resist. She loves me, or at least she lets me think so; she has a certain smile which she keeps for me alone; for me, her voice grows softer still. Oh, yes! she loves me! But she adores her father; she tells me of his kindness, his gentleness, his excellent qualities. Those praises are so many dagger-thrusts with which she stabs me to the heart.

[redacted] day I came near making myself the accomplice, as it were, of the crime which led to the opulence of the Taillefer family. I was on the point of asking the father for Victorine's hand. But I fled; I travelled; I went to Germany, to Andernach; and then — I returned! I found Victorine pale, and thinner; if I had seen her well in health and gay, I should certainly have been saved. Instead of which my love burst out

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again with untold violence. Fearing that my scruples might degenerate into monomania, I resolved to convoke a sanhedrim of sound consciences, and obtain from them some light on this problem of high morality and philosophy, — a problem which had been, as we shall see, still further complicated since my return.

Two days ago, therefore, I collected those of my friends to whom I attribute most delicacy, probity, and honor. I invited two Englishmen, the secretary of an embassy, and a puritan; a former minister, now a mature statesman; a priest, an old man; also my former guardian, a simple-hearted being who rendered so loyal a guardianship account that the memory of it is still green at the Palais; besides these, there were present a judge, a lawyer, and a notary, — in short, all social opinions, and all practical virtues.

We began by dining well, talking well, and making some noise; then, at dessert, I related my history candidly, and asked for advice, concealing, of course, the Taillefer name.

A profound silence suddenly fell upon the company. Then the notary took leave. He had, he said, a deed to draw.

The wine and the good dinner had reduced my former guardian to silence; in fact I was obliged later in the evening to put him under guardianship, to make sure of no mishap to him on his way home.

"I understand!" I cried. "By not giving an opinion you tell me energetically enough what I ought to do."

On this there came a stir throughout the assembly.

A capitalist who had subscribed for the children and tomb of General Foy exclaimed: —

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"Like Virtue's self, a crime has its degrees."

"Rash tongue!" said the former minister, in a low voice, nudging me with his elbow.

"Where's your difficulty?" asked a duke whose fortune is derived from the estates of stubborn Protestants, confiscated on the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

The lawyer rose, and said: —

"In law, the case submitted to us presents no difficulty. Monsieur le duc is right!" cried the legal organ. "There are time limitations. Where should we all be if we had to search into the origin of fortunes? This is simply an affair of conscience. If you must absolutely carry the case before some tribunal, go to that of the confessional."

The Code incarnate ceased speaking, sat down, and drank a glass of champagne. The man charged with the duty of explaining the gospel, the good priest, rose.

"God has made us all frail beings," he said firmly. "If you love the heiress of that crime, marry her; but content yourself with the property she derives from her mother; give that of the father to the poor."

"But," cried one of those pitiless hair-splitters who are often to be met with in the world, "perhaps the father could make a rich marriage only because he was rich himself; consequently, the marriage was the fruit of the crime."

"This discussion is, in itself, a verdict. There are some things on which a man does not deliberate," said my former guardian, who thought to enlighten the assembly with a flash of inebriety.

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"Yes!" said the secretary of an embassy.

"Yes!" said the priest.

But the two men did not mean the same thing.

A *doctrinaire*, who had missed his election to the Chamber by one hundred and fifty votes out of one hundred and fifty-five, here rose.

"Messieurs," he said, "this phenomenal incident of intellectual nature is one of those which stand out vividly from the normal condition to which society is subjected. Consequently the decision to be made ought to be the spontaneous act of our consciences, a sudden conception, a prompt inward verdict, a fugitive shadow of our mental apprehension, much like the flashes of sentiment which constitute taste. Let us vote."

"Let us vote!" cried all my guests.

I gave each two balls, one white, one red. The white, symbol of virginity, was to forbid the marriage; the red ball sanctioned it. I myself abstained from voting, out of delicacy.

My friends were seventeen in number; nine was therefore the majority. Each man put his ball into the wicker basket with a narrow throat, used to hold the numbered balls when card-players draw for their places at pool. We were all roused to a more or less keen curiosity; for this balloting to clarify morality was certainly original. Inspection of the ballot-box showed the presence of nine white balls! The result did not surprise me; but it came into my head to count the young men of my own age whom I had brought to sit in judgment. These casuists were precisely nine in number; they all had the same thought.

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"Oh, oh!" I said to myself, "here is secret unanimity to forbid the marriage, and secret unanimity to sanction it! How shall I solve that problem?"

"Where does the father-in-law live?" asked one of my school-friends, heedlessly, being less sophisticated than the others.

"There's no longer a father-in-law," I replied. "Hitherto, my conscience has spoken plainly enough to make your verdict superfluous. If to-day its voice is weakened, here is the cause of my cowardice. I received, about two months ago, this all-seducing letter."

And I showed them the following invitation, which I took from my pocket-book: —

"You are invited to be present at the funeral procession, burial services, and interment of Monsieur Jean-Frédéric Taillefer, of the house of Taillefer and Company, formerly Purveyor of Commissary-meats, in his lifetime chevalier of the Legion of honor, and of the Golden Spur, captain of the first company of the Grenadiers of the National Guard of Paris, deceased, May 1st, at his residence, rue Joubert; which will take place at, etc., etc.

"On the part of, etc."

"Now, what am I to do?" I continued; "I will put the question before you in a broad way. There is undoubtedly a sea of blood in Mademoiselle Taillefer's estates; her inheritance from her father is a vast Aceldama. I know that. *But* Prosper Magnan left no heirs; *but*, again, I have been unable to discover the family of the merchant who was murdered at Andernach. To whom therefore can I restore that fortune?

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"And ought it to be wholly restored? Have I the right to betray a secret surprised by me, — to add a murdered head to the dowry of an innocent girl, to give her for the rest of her life bad dreams, to deprive her of all her illusions, and say, 'Your gold is stained with blood'? I have borrowed the 'Dictionary of Cases of Conscience' from an old ecclesiastic, but I can find nothing there to solve my doubts. Shall I found pious masses for the repose of the souls of Prosper Magnan, Wahlenfer, and Taillefer? Here we are in the middle of the nineteenth century! Shall I build a hospital, or institute a prize for virtue? A prize for virtue would be given to scoundrels; and as for hospitals, they seem to me to have become in these days the protectors of vice. Besides, such charitable actions, more or less profitable to vanity, do they constitute reparation? — and to whom do I owe reparation? But I love; I love passionately. My love is my life. If I, without apparent motive, suggest to a young girl accustomed to luxury, to elegance, to a life fruitful of all enjoyments of art, a young girl who loves to idly listen at the opera to Rossini's music,— if to her I should propose that she deprive herself of fifteen hundred thousand francs in favor of broken-down old men, or scrofulous paupers, she would turn her back on me and laugh, or her confidential friend would tell her that I 'm a crazy jester. If in an ecstasy of love, I should paint to her the charms of a modest life, and a little home on the banks of the Loire; if I were to ask her to sacrifice her Parisian life on the altar of our love, it would be, in the first place, a virtuous lie; in the next, I might only be opening the

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way to some painful experience; I might lose the heart of a girl who loves society, and balls, and personal adornment, and *me* for the time being. Some slim and jaunty officer, with a well-frizzed moustache, who can play the piano, quote Lord Byron, and ride a horse elegantly, may get her away from me. What shall I do? For Heaven's sake, give me some advice!"

The honest man, that species of puritan not unlike the father of Jeannie Deans, of whom I have already told you, and who, up to the present moment had n't uttered a word, shrugged his shoulders, as he looked at me and said: —

"Idiot! why did you ask him if he came from Beauvais?"

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THE RECRUIT.

To my dear
Albert Marchand de la Ribellerie.

At times they saw him, by a phenomenon of vision or locomotion, abolish space in its two forms of Time and Distance; the former being intellectual space, the other physical space.

Intellectual History of Louis Lambert.

On an evening in the month of November, 1793, the principal persons of Carentan were assembled in the salon of Madame de Dey, where they met daily. Several circumstances which would never have attracted attention in a large town, though they greatly preoccupied the little one, gave to this habitual rendezvous an unusual interest. For the two preceding evenings Madame de Dey had closed her doors to the little company, on the ground that she was ill. Such an event would, in ordinary times, have produced as much effect as the closing of the theatres in Paris; life under those circumstances seems merely incomplete. But in 1793, Madame de Dey's action was likely to have fatal re-

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sults. The slightest departure from a usual custom became, almost invariably for the nobles, a matter of life or death. To fully understand the eager curiosity and searching inquiry which animated on this occasion the Norman countenances of all these rejected visitors, but more especially to enter into Madame de Dey's secret anxieties, it is necessary to explain the rôle she played at Carentan. The critical position in which she stood at this moment being that of many others during the Revolution the sympathies and recollections of more than one reader will help to give color to this narrative.

Madame de Dey, widow of a lieutenant-general, chevalier of the Orders, had left the court at the time of the emigration. Possessing a good deal of property in the neighborhood of Carentan, she took refuge in that town, hoping that the influence of the Terror would be little felt there. This expectation, based on a knowledge of the region, was well-founded. The Revolution committed but few ravages in Lower Normandy. Though Madame de Dey had known none but the nobles of her own caste when she visited her property in former years, she now felt it advisable to open her house to the principal bourgeois of the town, and to the new governmental authorities; trying to make them pleased at obtaining her society, without arousing either hatred or jealousy. Gracious and kind, gifted by nature with that inexpressible charm which can please without having recourse to subserviency or to making overtures, she succeeded in winning general esteem by an exquisite tact; the sensitive warnings of which enabled her to follow the delicate

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line along which she might satisfy the exactions of this mixed society, without humiliating the touchy pride of the *parvenus*, or shocking that of her own friends.

Then about thirty-eight years of age, she still preserved, not the fresh plump beauty which distinguishes the daughters of Lower Normandy, but a fragile and, so to speak, aristocratic beauty. Her features were delicate and refined, her figure supple and easy. When she spoke, her pale face lighted and seemed to acquire fresh life. Her large dark eyes were full of affability and kindness, and yet their calm, religious expression seemed to say that the springs of her existence were no longer in her.

Married in the flower of her age to an old and jealous soldier, the falseness of her position in the midst of a court noted for its gallantry contributed much, no doubt, to draw a veil of melancholy over a face where the charms and the vivacity of love must have shone in earlier days. Obliged to repress the naïve impulses and emotions of a woman at the period when she simply feels them instead of reflecting about them, passion was still virgin in the depths of her heart. Her principal attraction came, in fact, from this innate youth, which sometimes, however, played her false, and gave to her ideas an innocent expression of desire. Her manner and appearance commanded respect, but there was always in her bearing, in her voice, a sort of looking forward to some unknown future, as in girlhood. The most insensible man would find himself in love with her, and yet be restrained by a sort of respectful fear, inspired by her courtly and polished manners. Her soul, naturally noble, but strengthened by cruel trials,

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was far indeed from the common run, and men did justice to it. Such a soul necessarily required a lofty passion; and the affections of Madame de Dey were concentrated in a single sentiment, — that of motherhood. The happiness and pleasure of which her married life was deprived, she found in the passionate love she bore her son. She loved him not only with the pure and deep devotion of a mother, but with the coquetry of a mistress, and the jealousy of a wife. She was miserable away from him, uneasy at his absence, could never see him enough, and lived only through him and for him. To make men understand the strength of this feeling, it suffices to add that the son was not only the sole child of Madame de Dey, but also her last relation, the only being in the world to whom the fears and hopes and joys of her life could be naturally attached.

The late Comte de Dey was the last surviving scion of his family, and she herself was the sole heiress of her own. Human interests and projects combined, therefore, with the noblest needs of the soul to exalt in this mother's heart a sentiment that is always so strong in the hearts of women. She had brought up this son with the utmost difficulty, and with infinite pains, which rendered the youth still dearer to her; a score of times the doctors had predicted his death, but, confident in her own presentiments, her own unfailing hope, she had the happiness of seeing him come safely through the perils of childhood, with a constitution that was ever improving, in spite of the warnings of the Faculty.

Thanks to her constant care, this son had grown

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and developed so much, and so gracefully, that at twenty years of age, he was thought a most elegant cavalier at Versailles. Madame de Dey possessed a happiness which does not always crown the efforts and struggles of a mother. Her son adored her; their souls understood each other with fraternal sympathy. If they had not been bound by nature's ties, they would instinctively have felt for each other that friendship of man to man, which is so rarely to be met in this life. Appointed sub-lieütenant of dragoons, at the age of eighteen, the young Comte de Dey had obeyed the point of honor of the period by following the princes of the blood in their emigration.

Thus Madame de Dey, noble, rich, and the mother of an *émigré*, could not be unaware of the dangers of her cruel situation. Having no other desire than to preserve a fortune for her son, she renounced the happiness of emigrating with him; and when she read the vigorous laws by virtue of which the Republic daily confiscated the property of *émigrés*, she congratulated herself on that act of courage; was she not guarding the property of her son at the peril of her life? And when she heard of the terrible executions ordered by the Convention, she slept in peace, knowing that her sole treasure was in safety, far from danger, far from scaffolds. She took pleasure in believing that they had each chosen the wiser course, a course which would save to *him* both life and fortune.

With this secret comfort in her mind, she was ready to make all the concessions required by those evil days, and without sacrificing either her dignity as a woman, or her aristocratic beliefs, she conciliated the good-will

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of those about her. Madame de Dey had fully understood the difficulties that awaited her on coming to Carentan. To seek to occupy a leading position would be daily defiance to the scaffold; yet she pursued her even way. Sustained by her motherly courage, she won the affections of the poor by comforting indiscriminately all miseries, and she made herself necessary to the rich by assisting their pleasures. She received the *procureur* of the commune, the mayor, the judge of the district court, the public prosecutor, and even the judges of the revolutionary tribunal.

The first four of these personages, being bachelors, courted her with the hope of marriage, furthering their cause by either letting her see the evils they could do her, or those from which they could protect her. The public prosecutor, previously an attorney at Caen, and the manager of the countess's affairs, tried to inspire her with love by an appearance of generosity and devotion; a dangerous attempt for her. He was the most to be feared among her suitors. He alone knew the exact condition of the property of his former client. His passion was increased by cupidity, and his cause was backed by enormous power, the power of life and death throughout the district. This man, still young, showed so much apparent nobleness and generosity in his proceedings that Madame de Dey had not yet been able to judge him. But, disregarding the danger that attends all attempts at subtilty with Normans, she employed the inventive wit and slyness which Nature grants to women in opposing the four rivals one against the other. By thus gaining time, she hoped to come safe and sound to the end of the national troubles.

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At this period, the royalists in the interior of France expected day by day that the Revolution would be ended on the morrow. This conviction was the ruin of very many of them.

In spite of these difficulties, the countess had maintained her independence very cleverly until the day when, by an inexplicable imprudence, she closed her doors to her usual evening visitors. Madame de Dey inspired so genuine and deep an interest, that the persons who called upon her that evening expressed extreme anxiety on being told that she was unable to receive them. Then, with that frank curiosity which appears in provincial manners, they inquired what misfortune, grief, or illness afflicted her. In reply to these questions, an old housekeeper named Brigitte informed them that her mistress had shut herself up in her room and would see no one, not even the servants of the house. The semi-cloistral existence of the inhabitants of a little town creates so invincible a habit of analyzing and explaining the actions of their neighbors, that after compassionating Madame de Dey (without knowing whether she were happy or unhappy), they proceeded to search for the reasons of this sudden retreat.

"If she were ill," said the first Inquisitive, "she would have sent for the doctor; but the doctor has been all day long playing chess with me. He told me, laughing, that in these days there was but one malady, and that was incurable."

This joke was cautiously uttered. Men, women, old men, and young girls, all set to work to explore the vast field of conjecture. The next day, conjectures

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became suspicions. As life is all aboveboard in a little town, the women were the first to learn that Brigitte had made larger purchases than usual in the market. This fact could not be disputed: Brigitte had been seen there, very early in the morning; and, extraordinary event! she had bought the only hare the market afforded. Now all the town knew that Madame de Dey did not like game. The hare became, therefore, the point of departure for a vast array of suspicions. The old men who were taking their walks abroad, remarked a sort of concentrated activity about Madame de Dey's premises, shown by the very precautions which the servants took to conceal it. The footman was beating a carpet in the garden. The day before, no one would have noticed that fact; but the carpet now became a corner-stone on which the whole town built up its theories. Each individual had his or her surmise.

The second day, on learning that Madame de Dey declared herself ill, the principal personages of Carentan, assembled in the evening at the house of the mayor's brother, an old married merchant, a man of strict integrity, greatly respected, and for whom Madame de Dey had shown much esteem. There all the aspirants for the hand of the rich widow had a tale to tell that was more or less probable; and each expected to turn to his own profit the secret event which he thus recounted. The public prosecutor imagined a whole drama to result in the return by night of Madame de Dey's son, the *émigré*. The mayor was convinced that a priest who refused the oath had arrived from La Vendée and asked for asylum; but the

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day being Friday, the purchase of a hare embarrassed the good mayor not a little. The judge of the district court held firmly to the theory of a Chouan leader or a body of Vendéans hotly pursued. Others were convinced that the person harbored was a noble escaped from the Paris prisons. In short, they all suspected the countess of being guilty of one of those generosities, which the laws of the day called crimes, and punished on the scaffold. The public prosecutor remarked in a low voice that it would be best to say no more, but to do their best to save the poor woman from the abyss toward which she was hurrying.

"If you talk about this affair," he said, "I shall be obliged to take notice of it, and search her house, and *then* —"

He said no more, but all present understood what he meant.

The sincere friends of Madame de Dey were so alarmed about her, that on the morning of the third day, the *procureur-syndic* of the commune made his wife write her a letter, urging her to receive her visitors as usual that evening. Bolder still, the old merchant went himself in the morning to Madame de Dey's house, and, strong in the service he wanted to render her, he insisted on seeing her, and was amazed to find her in the garden gathering flowers for her vases.

"She must be protecting a lover," thought the old man, filled with sudden pity for the charming woman.

The singular expression on the countess's face strengthened this conjecture. Much moved at the thought of such devotion, for all men are flattered by

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the sacrifices a woman makes for one of them, the old man told the countess of the rumors that were floating about the town, and the dangers to which she was exposing herself.

"For," he said in conclusion, "though some of the authorities will readily pardon a heroism which protects a priest, none of them will spare you if they discover that you are sacrificing yourself to the interests of your heart."

At these words Madame de Dey looked at the old man with a wild and bewildered air, that made him shudder.

"Come," she said, taking him by the hand and leading him into her bedroom. After assuring herself that they were quite alone, she drew from her bosom a soiled and crumpled letter.

"Read that," she said, making a violent effort to say the words.

She fell into a chair, seemingly exhausted. While the old man searched for his spectacles and rubbed their glasses, she raised her eyes to him, and seemed to study him with curiosity; then she said in an altered voice, and very softly, —

"I trust you."

"I am here to share your crime," replied the good man, simply.

She quivered. For the first time in that little town, her soul sympathized with that of another. The old man now understood both the hopes and the fears of the poor woman. The letter was from her son. He had returned to France to share in Granville's expedition, and was taken prisoner. The letter was written

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from his cell, but it told her to hope. He did not doubt his means of escape, and he named to her three days, on one of which he expected to be with her in disguise. But in case he did not reach Carentan by the evening of the third day, she might know some fatal difficulty had occurred, and the letter contained his last wishes and a sad farewell. The paper trembled in the old man's hand.

"This is the third day," cried the countess, rising and walking hurriedly up and down.

"You have been very imprudent," said the merchant. "Why send Brigitte to buy those provisions?"

"But he may arrive half-dead with hunger, exhausted, and —"

She could say no more.

"I am sure of my brother the mayor," said the old man. "I will see him at once, and put him in your interests."

After talking with the mayor, the shrewd old man made visits on various pretexts to the principal families of Carentan, to all of whom he mentioned that Madame de Dey, in spite of her illness, would receive her friends that evening. Matching his own craft against those wily Norman minds, he replied to the questions put to him on the nature of Madame de Dey's illness in a manner that hoodwinked the community. He related to a gouty old dame, that Madame de Dey had almost died of a sudden attack of gout in the stomach, but had been relieved by a remedy which the famous doctor, Tronchin, had once recommended to her, — namely, to apply the skin of a freshly-flayed hare on the pit of the stomach, and to remain in bed

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without making the slightest movement for two days. This tale had prodigious success, and the doctor of Carentan, a royalist *in petto*, increased its effect by the manner in which he discussed the remedy.

Nevertheless, suspicions had taken too strong a root in the minds of some obstinate persons, and a few philosophers, to be thus dispelled; so that all Madame de Dey's usual visitors came eagerly and early that evening to watch her countenance: some out of true friendship, but most of them to detect the secret of her seclusion.

They found the countess seated as usual, at the corner of the great fireplace in her salon, a room almost as unpretentious as the other salons in Carentan; for, in order not to wound the narrow views of her guests, she denied herself the luxuries to which she was accustomed. The floor of her reception room was not even waxed, the walls were still hung with dingy tapestries; she used the country furniture, burned tallow candles, and followed the customs of the town, — adopting provincial life, and not shrinking from its pettiness or its many disagreeable privations. Knowing, however, that her guests would pardon luxuries if provided for their own comfort, she neglected nothing which conduced to their personal enjoyment, and gave them, more especially, excellent dinners.

Toward seven o'clock on this memorable evening, her guests were all assembled in a wide circle around the fireplace. The mistress of the house, sustained in her part by the sympathizing glances of the old merchant, submitted with wonderful courage to the minute questioning and stupid, or frivolous, comments

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of her visitors. At every rap upon her door, every footfall echoing in the street, she hid her emotions by starting topics relating to the interests of the town, and she raised such a lively discussion on the quality of ciders, which was ably seconded by the old merchant, that the company almost forgot to watch her, finding her countenance quite natural, and her composure imperturbable. The public prosecutor and one of the judges of the revolutionary tribunal was taciturn, observing attentively every change in her face; every now and then they addressed her some embarrassing question, to which, however, the countess answered with admirable presence of mind. Mothers have such courage!

After Madame de Dey had arranged the card parties, placing some guests at the boston, and some at the whist tables, she stood talking to a number of young people with extreme ease and liveliness of manner, playing her part like a consummate actress. Presently she suggested a game of loto, and offered to find the box, on the ground that she alone knew where it was, and then she disappeared.

"I am suffocating, my poor Brigitte," she cried, wiping the tears that gushed from her eyes, now brilliant with fever, anxiety, and impatience. "He does not come," she moaned, looking round the room prepared for her son. "Here alone I can breathe, I can live! A few minutes more and he *must* be here; for I know he is living. I am certain of it, my heart says so. Don't you hear something, Brigitte? I would give the rest of my life to know at this moment whether he were still in prison, or out in the free country. Oh! I wish I could stop thinking—"

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She again examined the room to see if all were in order. A good fire burned on the hearth, the shutters were carefully closed, the furniture shone with rubbing; even the manner in which the bed was made showed that the countess had assisted Brigitte in every detail; her hopes were uttered in the delicate care given to that room where she expected to fold her son in her arms. A mother alone could have thought of all his wants; a choice repast, rare wine, fresh linen, slippers, in short, everything the tired man would need, — all were there that nothing might be lacking; the comforts of his home should reveal to him without words the tenderness of his mother!

"Brigitte!" said the countess, in a heart-rending tone, placing a chair before the table, as if to give a semblance of reality to her hopes, and so increase the strength of her illusions.

"Ah! madame, he will come. He is not far off. I have n't a doubt he is living, and on his way," replied Brigitte. "I put a key in the Bible, and I held it on my fingers while Cottin read a chapter in the gospel of Saint John; and, madame, the key never turned at all!"

"Is that a good sign?" asked the countess.

"Oh! madame, that 's a well-known sign. I would wager my salvation, he still lives. God would not so deceive us."

"Ah! if he would only come — no matter for his danger here."

"Poor Monsieur Auguste!" cried Brigitte, "he must be toiling along the roads on foot."

"There 's eight o'clock striking now," cried the countess, in terror.

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She dared not stay away any longer from her guests; but before re-entering the salon, she paused a moment under the peristyle of the staircase, listening if any sound were breaking the silence of the street. She smiled at Brigitte's husband, who was standing sentinel at the door, and whose eyes seemed stupefied by the intensity of his attention to the murmurs of the street and night.

Madame de Dey re-entered her salon, affecting gayety, and began to play loto with the young people; but after a while she complained of feeling ill, and returned to her chimney-corner.

Such was the situation of affairs, and of people's minds in the house of Madame de Dey, while along the road, between Paris and Cherbourg, a young man in a brown jacket, called a *carmagnole*, worn *de rigueur* at that period, was making his way to Carentan. When drafts for the army were first instituted, there was little or no discipline. The requirements of the moment did not allow the Republic to equip its soldiers immediately, and it was not an unusual thing to see the roads covered with recruits, who were still wearing citizen's dress. These young men either preceded or lagged behind their respective battalions, according to their power of enduring the fatigues of a long march.

The young man of whom we are now speaking, was much in advance of a column of recruits, known to be on its way from Cherbourg, which the mayor of Carentan was awaiting hourly, in order to give them their billets for the night. The young man walked with a jaded step, but firmly, and his gait seemed to show

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that he had long been familiar with military hardships. Though the moon was shining on the meadows about Carentan, he had noticed heavy clouds on the horizon, and the fear of being overtaken by a tempest may have hurried his steps, which were certainly more brisk than his evident lassitude could have desired. On his back was an almost empty bag, and he held in his hand a boxwood stick, cut from the tall broad hedges of that shrub, which is so frequent in Lower Normandy.

This solitary wayfarer entered Carentan, the steeples of which, touched by the moonlight, had only just appeared to him. His step woke the echoes of the silent streets, but he met no one until he came to the shop of a weaver, who was still at work. From him he inquired his way to the mayor's house, and the way-worn recruit soon found himself seated in the porch of that establishment, waiting for the billet he had asked for. Instead of receiving it at once, he was summoned to the mayor's presence, where he found himself the object of minute observation. The young man was good-looking, and belonged, evidently, to a distinguished family. His air and manner were those of the nobility. The intelligence of a good education was in his face.

"What is your name?" asked the mayor, giving him a shrewd and meaning look.

"Julien Jussieu."

"Where do you come from?" continued the magistrate, with a smile of incredulity.

"Paris."

"Your comrades are at some distance," resumed the Norman official, in a sarcastic tone.

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"I am nine miles in advance of the battalion."

"Some strong feeling must be bringing you to Carentan, citizen recruit," said the mayor, slyly. "Very good, very good," he added hastily, silencing with a wave of his hand a reply the young man was about to make. "I know where to send you. Here," he added, giving him his billet, "take this and go to that house, *Citizen Jussieu.*"

So saying, the mayor held out to the recruit a billet, on which the address of Madame de Dey's house was written. The young man read it with an air of curiosity.

"He knows he has n't far to go," thought the mayor as the recruit left the house. "That 's a bold fellow! God guide him! He seemed to have his answers ready. But he 'd have been lost if any one but I had questioned him and demanded to see his papers."

At that instant, the clocks of Carentan struck half-past nine; the lanterns were lighted in Madame de Dey's antechamber; the servants were helping their masters and mistresses to put on their clogs, their cloaks, and their mantles; the card-players had paid their debts, and all the guests were preparing to leave together after the established custom of provincial towns.

"The prosecutor, it seems, has stayed behind," said a lady, perceiving that that important personage was missing, when the company parted in the large square to go to their several houses.

That terrible magistrate was, in fact, alone with the countess, who waited, trembling, till it should please him to depart.

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"Citoyenne," he said, after a long silence in which there was something terrifying, "I am here to enforce the laws of the Republic."

Madame de Dey shuddered.

"Have you nothing to reveal to me?" he demanded.

"'Nothing," she replied, astonished.

"Ah! madame," cried the prosecutor, changing his tone and seating himself beside her, "at this moment, for want of a word between us, you and I may be risking our heads on the scaffold. I have too long observed your character, your soul, your manners, to share the error into which you have persuaded your friends this evening. You are, I cannot doubt, expecting your son."

The countess made a gesture of denial; but she had turned pale, the muscles of her face contracted from the effort that she made to exhibit firmness, and the implacable eye of the public prosecutor lost none of her movements.

"Well, receive him," continued the functionary of the Revolution, "but do not keep him under your roof later than seven o'clock in the morning. To-morrow, at eight, I shall be at your door with a denunciation."

She looked at him with a stupid air that might have made a tiger pitiful.

"I will prove," he continued in a kindly voice, "the falsity of that denunciation, by making a careful search of the premises; and the nature of my report will protect you in future from all suspicions. I will speak of your patriotic gifts, your civic virtues, and that will save you."

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Madame de Dey feared a trap, and she stood motionless; but her face was on fire, and her tongue stiff in her mouth. A rap sounded on the door.

"Oh!" cried the mother, falling on her knees, "save him! save him!"

"Yes, we will save him," said the official, giving her a look of passion; "if it costs us our life, we will save him."

"I am lost!" she murmured, as the prosecutor raised her courteously.

"Madame," he said, with an oratorical movement, "I will owe you only — to yourself."

"Madame, he has come," cried Brigitte, rushing in and thinking her mistress was alone.

At sight of the public prosecutor, the old woman, flushed and joyous as she was, became motionless and livid.

"Who has come?" asked the prosecutor.

"A recruit, whom the mayor has sent to lodge here," replied Brigitte, showing the billet.

"True," said the prosecutor, reading the paper. "We expect a detachment to-night."

And he went away.

The countess had too much need at this moment to believe in the sincerity of her former attorney, to distrust his promise. She mounted the stairs rapidly, though her strength seemed failing her; then she opened the door, saw her son, and fell into his arms half dead, —

"Oh! my child! my child!" she cried, sobbing, and covering him with kisses in a sort of frenzy.

"Madame!" said an unknown man.

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"Ah! it is not he!" she cried, recoiling in terror, and standing erect before the recruit, at whom she gazed with a haggard eye.

"Holy Father! what a likeness!" said Brigitte.

There was silence for a moment. The recruit himself shuddered at the aspect of Madame de Dey.

"Ah! monsieur," she said, leaning on Brigitte's husband, who had entered the room, and feeling to its fullest extent an agony the fear of which had already nearly killed her. "Monsieur, I cannot stay with you longer. Allow my people to attend upon you."

She returned to her own room, half carried by Brigitte and her old servant.

"Oh! madame," said Brigitte, as she undressed her mistress, "must that man sleep in Monsieur Auguste's bed, and put on Monsieur Auguste's slippers, and eat the pâté I made for Monsieur Auguste? They may guillotine me if I —"

"Brigitte!" cried Madame de Dey.

Brigitte was mute.

"Hush!" said her husband in her ear, "do you want to kill madame?"

At that moment the recruit made a noise in the room above by sitting down to his supper.

"I cannot stay here!" cried Madame de Dey. "I will go into the greenhouse; there I can hear what happens outside during the night."

She still floated between the fear of having lost her son and the hope of his suddenly appearing.

The night was horribly silent. There was one dreadful moment for the countess, when the battalion of recruits passed through the town, and went to their

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several billets. Every step, every sound, was a hope, — and a lost hope. After that the stillness continued. Towards morning the countess was obliged to return to her room. Brigitte, who watched her movements, was uneasy when she did not reappear, and entering the room she found her dead.

"She must have heard that recruit walking about Monsieur Auguste's room, and singing their damned Marseillaise, as if he were in a stable," cried Brigitte. "That was enough to kill her!"

The death of the countess had a far more solemn cause; it resulted, no doubt, from an awful vision. At the exact hour when Madame de Dey died at Carentan, her son was shot in the Morbihan. That tragic fact may be added to many recorded observations on sympathies that are known to ignore the laws of space: records which men of solitude are collecting with far-seeing curiosity, and which will some day serve as the basis of a new science for which, up to the present time, a man of genius has been lacking.

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EL VERDUGO.

TO MARTINEZ DE LA ROSA.

The clock of the little town of Menda had just struck midnight. At that moment a young French officer, leaning on the parapet of a long terrace which bordered the gardens of the château de Menda, seemed buried in thoughts that were deeper than comported with the light-hearted carelessness of military life; though it must be said that never were hour, scene, or night more propitious for meditation. The beautiful sky of Spain spread its dome of azure above his head. The scintillation of the stars and the soft light of the moon illumined the delightful valley that lay at his feet. Resting partly against an orange-tree in bloom, the young major could see, three hundred feet below him, the town of Menda, at the base of the rock on which the castle is built. Turning his head, he looked down upon the sea, the sparkling waters of which encircled the landscape with a sheet of silver.

The château was illuminated. The joyous uproar of a ball, the sounds of an orchestra, the laughter of the

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dancers came to him, mingling with the distant murmur of the waves. The coolness of the night gave fresh energy to his body, that was tired with the heat of the day. Besides which, the gardens were planted with trees so balmy and flowers so sweet, that the young man felt as if plunged in a perfumed bath.

The château de Menda belonged to a grandee of Spain, who was at this time living there with his family. During the whole evening, the eldest daughter had looked at the young officer with an interest expressing extreme sadness, and such implied compassion on the part of a Spaniard might well have caused the revery of the Frenchman. Clara was beautiful; and though she had three brothers and one sister, the wealth of the Marquis de Legañès seemed sufficient to justify Victor Marchand in believing that the young lady would be richly dowered. But could he dare to believe that the daughter of the proudest noble in Spain would be given to the son of a Parisian grocer? Besides, Frenchmen were hated. The marquis having been suspected by General G—t—r, who governed the province, of preparing an insurrection in favor of Ferdinand VII., the battalion commanded by Victor Marchand was quartered in the little town of Menda, to hold in check the neighboring districts, which were under the control of the Marquis de Legañès.

A recent dispatch from Maréchal Ney made it seem probable that the English would soon land a force upon the coast; and he mentioned the marquis as the man who was believed to be in communication with the cabinet of London. Thus, in spite of the cordial welcome which that Spaniard had given to Victor

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Marchand and his soldiers, the young officer held himself perpetually on his guard. As he came from the ballroom to the terrace, intending to cast his eye upon the state of the town and the outlying districts confided to his care, he asked himself how he ought to interpret the good will which the marquis never failed to show him, and whether the fears of his general were warranted by the apparent tranquillity of the region. But no sooner had he reached the terrace than these thoughts were driven from his mind by a sense of prudence, and also by natural curiosity.

He saw in the town a great number of lights. Although it was the feast of Saint James, he had, that very morning, ordered that all lights should be put out at the hour prescribed in the army regulations, those of the château alone excepted. He saw, it is true, the bayonets of his soldiers gleaming here and there at their appointed posts; but the silence was solemn, and nothing indicated that the Spaniards were disregarding his orders in the intoxication of a fête. Endeavoring to explain to himself this culpable and deliberate infraction of rules on the part of the inhabitants, it struck him as the more incomprehensible because he had left a number of his officers in charge of patrols who were to make their rounds during the night, and enforce the regulations.

With the impetuosity of youth, he was about to spring through an opening in the terrace wall, and descend by the rocks more rapidly than by the usual road to a little outpost which he had placed at the entrance of the town, on the side toward the château, when a slight noise arrested him. He fancied he

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heard the light step of a woman on the gravelled path behind him. He turned his head and saw no one, but his eyes were caught by an extraordinary light upon the ocean. Suddenly he beheld a sight so alarming that he stood for a moment motionless with surprise, fancying that his senses were mistaken. The white rays of the moonlight enabled him to distinguish sails at some distance. He tried to convince himself that this vision was an optical delusion caused by the caprices of the waves and the moon. At that moment, a hoarse voice uttered his name. He looked toward the opening in the wall, and saw the head of the orderly who had accompanied him to the château rising cautiously through it.

"Is it you, commander?"

"Yes. What is it?" replied the young man, in a low voice, a sort of presentiment warning him to act mysteriously.

"Those rascals are squirming like worms," said the man; "and I have come, if you please, to tell you my little observations."

"Speak out."

"I have just followed from the château a man with a lantern who is coming this way. A lantern is mightily suspicious! I don't believe that Christian has any call to go and light the church tapers at this time of night. They want to murder us! said I to myself, so I followed his heels; and I've discovered, commander, close by here, on a pile of rock, a great heap of fagots — he's after lighting a beacon of some kind up here, I'll be bound —"

A terrible cry echoing suddenly through the town

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stopped the soldier's speech. A brilliant light illuminated the young officer. The poor orderly was shot in the head and fell. A fire of straw and dry wood blazed up like a conflagration not thirty feet distant from the young commander. The music and the laughter ceased in the ballroom. The silence of death, broken only by moans, succeeded to the joyous sounds of a festival. A single cannon-shot echoed along the plain of the ocean.

A cold sweat rolled from the officer's brow. He wore no sword. He was confident that his soldiers were murdered, and that the English were about to disembark. He saw himself dishonored if he lived, summoned before a council of war to explain his want of vigilance; then he measured with his eye the depths of the descent, and was springing towards it when Clara's hand seized his.

"Fly!" she said; "my brothers are following me to kill you. Your soldiers are killed. Escape yourself. At the foot of the rock, over there, see! you will find Juanito's barb — Go, go!"

She pushed him; but the stupefied young man looked at her, motionless, for a moment. Then, obeying the instinct of self-preservation which never abandons any man, even the strongest, he sprang through the park in the direction indicated, running among rocks where goats alone had hitherto made their way. He heard Clara calling to her brothers to pursue him; he heard the steps of his murderers; he heard the balls of several muskets whistling about his ears; but he reached the valley, found the horse, mounted him, and disappeared with the rapidity of an arrow.

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A few hours later the young officer reached the headquarters of General G—t—r, whom he found at dinner with his staff.

"I bring you my head!" cried the commander of the lost battalion as he entered, pale and overcome.

He sat down and related the horrible occurrence. An awful silence followed his tale.

"I think you more unfortunate than criminal," replied the terrible general, when at last he spoke. "You are not responsible for the crime of those Spaniards; and, unless the marshal should think otherwise, I absolve you."

These words gave but a feeble consolation to the unhappy officer.

"But when the emperor hears of it!" he cried.

"He will want to have you shot," said the general; "but we will see about that. Now," he added in a stern tone, "not another word of this, except to turn it into a vengeance which shall impress with salutary terror a people who make war like savages."

An hour later a whole regiment, a detachment of cavalry, and a battery of artillery were on their way to Menda. The general and Victor marched at the head of the column. The soldiers, informed of the massacre of their comrades, were possessed by fury. The distance which separated the town of Menda from general headquarters, was marched with marvellous rapidity. On the way, the general found all the villages under arms. Each of the wretched hamlets was surrounded, and the inhabitants decimated.

By one of those fatalities which are inexplicable, the British ships lay to without advancing. It was known

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later that these vessels carried the artillery, and had outsailed the rest of the transports. Thus the town of Menda, deprived of the support it expected, and which the appearance of the British fleet in the offing had led the inhabitants to suppose was at hand, was surrounded by French troops almost without a blow being struck. The people of the town, seized with terror, offered to surrender at discretion. With a spirit of devotion not rare in the Peninsula, the slayers of the French soldiery, fearing, from the cruelty of their commander, that Menda would be given to the flames, and the whole population put to the sword, proposed to the general to denounce themselves. He accepted their offer, making a condition that the inhabitants of the château, from the marquis to the lowest valet, should be delivered into his hands. This condition being agreed to, the general proceeded to pardon the rest of the population, and to prevent his soldiers from pillaging the town or setting fire to it. An enormous tribute was levied, and the wealthiest inhabitants held prisoners to secure the payment of it, which payment was to be made within twenty-four hours.

The general took all precautions necessary for the safety of his troops, and provided for the defence of the region from outside attack, refusing to allow his soldiers to be billeted in the houses. After putting them in camp, he went up to the château and took possession of it. The members of the Legañès family and their servants were bound and kept under guard in the great hall where the ball had taken place. The windows of this room commanded the terrace which overhung the town. Headquarters were established in

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one of the galleries, where the general held, in the first place, a council as to the measures that should be taken to prevent the landing of the British. After sending an aide-de-camp to Maréchal Ney, and having ordered batteries to certain points along the shore, the general and his staff turned their attention to the prisoners. Two hundred Spaniards who had delivered themselves up were immediately shot. After this military execution, the general ordered as many gibbets planted on the terrace as there were members of the family of Legañès, and he sent for the executioner of the town.

Victor Marchand took advantage of the hour before dinner, to go and see the prisoners. Before long he returned to the general.

"I have come," he said, in a voice full of feeling, "to ask for mercy."

"You!" said the general, in a tone of bitter irony.

"Alas!" replied Victor, "it is only a sad mercy. The marquis, who has seen those gibbets set up, hopes that you will change that mode of execution. He asks you to behead his family, as befits nobility."

"So be it," replied the general.

"They also ask for religious assistance, and to be released from their bonds; they promise in return to make no attempt to escape."

"I consent," said the general; "but I make you responsible for them."

"The marquis offers you his whole fortune, if you will consent to pardon one of his sons."

"Really!" exclaimed the general. "His property belongs already to King Joseph."

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He stopped. A thought, a contemptuous thought, wrinkled his brow, and he said presently, —

"I will surpass his wishes. I comprehend the importance of his last request. Well, he shall buy the continuance of his name and lineage, but Spain shall forever connect with it the memory of his treachery and his punishment. I will give life and his whole fortune to whichever of his sons will perform the office of executioner on the rest. Go; not another word to me on the subject."

Dinner was served. The officers satisfied an appetite sharpened by exertion. A single one of them, Victor Marchand, was not at the feast. After hesitating long, he returned to the hall where the proud family of Legañès were prisoners, casting a mournful look on the scene now presented in that apartment where, only two nights before, he had seen the heads of the two young girls and the three young men turning giddily in the waltz. He shuddered as he thought how soon they would fall, struck off by the sabre of the executioner.

Bound in their gilded chairs, the father and mother, the three sons, and the two daughters, sat rigid in a state of complete immobility. Eight servants stood near them, their arms bound behind their backs. These fifteen persons looked at one another gravely, their eyes scarcely betraying the sentiments that filled their souls. The sentinels, also motionless, watched them, but respected the sorrow of those cruel enemies.

An expression of inquiry came upon the faces of all when Victor appeared. He gave the order to unbind the prisoners, and went himself to unfasten the cords

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that held Clara in her chair. She smiled sadly. The officer could not help touching softly the arms of the young girl as he looked with sad admiration at her beautiful hair and her supple figure. She was a true Spaniard, having the Spanish complexion, the Spanish eyes with their curved lashes, and their large pupils blacker than a raven's wing.

"Have you succeeded?" she said, with one of those funereal smiles in which something of girlhood lingers.

Victor could not keep himself from groaning. He looked in turn at the three brothers, and then at Clara. One brother, the eldest, was thirty years of age. Though small and somewhat ill-made, with an air that was haughty and disdainful, he was not lacking in a certain nobility of manner, and he seemed to have something of that delicacy of feeling which made the Spanish chivalry of other days so famous. He was named Juanito. The second son, Felipe, was about twenty years of age; he resembled Clara. The youngest was eight. A painter would have seen in the features of Manuelo a little of that Roman constancy that David has given to children in his republican pages. The head of the old marquis, covered with flowing white hair, seemed to have escaped from a picture of Murillo. As he looked at them, the young officer shook his head, despairing that any one of those four beings would accept the dreadful bargain of the general. Nevertheless, he found courage to reveal it to Clara.

The girl shuddered for a moment; then she recovered her calmness, and went to her father, kneeling at his feet.

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"Oh!" she said to him, "make Juanito swear that he will obey, faithfully, the orders that you will give him, and our wishes will be fulfilled."

The marquise quivered with hope. But when, leaning against her husband, she heard the horrible confidence that Clara now made to him, the mother fainted. Juanito, on hearing the offer, bounded like a lion in his cage.

Victor took upon himself to send the guard away, after obtaining from the marquis a promise of absolute submission. The servants were delivered to the executioner, who hanged them.

When the family were alone, with no one but Victor to watch them, the old father rose.

"Juanito!" he said.

Juanito answered only with a motion of the head that signified refusal, falling back into his chair, and looking at his parents with dry and awful eyes. Clara went up to him with a cheerful air and sat upon his knee.

"Dear Juanito," she said, passing her arm around his neck and kissing his eyelids, "if you knew how sweet death would seem to me if given by you! Think! I should be spared the odious touch of an executioner. You would save me from all the woes that await me — and, oh! dear Juanito! you would not have me belong to any one — therefore —"

Her velvet eyes cast gleams of fire at Victor, as if to rouse in the heart of Juanito his hatred of the French.

"Have courage," said his brother Felipe; "otherwise our race, our almost royal race, must die extinct."

Suddenly Clara rose, the group that had formed

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about Juanito separated, and the son, rebellious with good reason, saw before him his old father standing erect, who said in solemn tones, —

"Juanito, I command you to obey."

The young count remained immovable. Then his father knelt at his feet. Involuntarily Clara, Felipe, and Manuelo imitated his action. They all stretched out their hands to him, who was to save the family from extinction, and each seemed to echo the words of the father.

"My son, can it be that you would fail in Spanish energy and true feeling? Will you leave me longer on my knees? Why do you consider *your* life, *your* sufferings only? Is this my son?" he added, turning to his wife.

"He consents!" cried the mother, in despair, seeing a motion of Juanito's eyelids, the meaning of which was known to her alone.

Mariquita, the second daughter, was on her knees pressing her mother in her feeble arms, and as she wept hot tears her little brother scolded her.

At this moment the chaplain of the château entered the hall; the family instantly surrounded him and led him to Juanito. Victor, unable to endure the scene any longer, made a sign to Clara, and went away, determined to make one more attempt upon the general.

He found him in fine good-humour, in the midst of a banquet, drinking with his officers, who were growing hilarious.

An hour later, one hundred of the leading inhabitants of Menda assembled on the terrace, according

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to the orders of the general, to witness the execution of the Legañès family. A detachment of soldiers were posted to restrain the Spaniards, stationed beneath the gallows on which the servants had been hanged. The heads of the burghers almost touched the feet of these martyrs. Thirty feet from this group was a block, and on it glittered a scimetar. An executioner was present in case Juanito refused his obedience at the last moment.

Soon the Spaniards heard, in the midst of the deepest silence, the steps of many persons, the measured sound of the march of soldiers, and the slight rattle of their accoutrements. These noises mingled with the gay laughter of the officers, as a few nights earlier the dances of a ball had served to mask the preparations for a bloody treachery. All eyes turned to the château and saw the noble family advancing with inconceivable composure. Their faces were serene and calm.

One member alone, pale, undone, leaned upon the priest, who spent his powers of religious consolation upon this man, — the only one who was to live. The executioner knew, as did all present, that Juanito had agreed to accept his place for that one day. The old marquis and his wife, Clara, Mariquita, and the two younger brothers walked forward and knelt down a few steps distant from the fatal block. Juanito was led forward by the priest. When he reached the place the executioner touched him on the arm and gave him, probably, a few instructions. The confessor, meantime, turned the victims so that they might not see the fatal blows. But, like true Spaniards, they stood erect without faltering.

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Clara was the first to come forward.

"Juanito," she said, "have pity on my want of courage; begin with me."

At this instant the hurried steps of a man were heard, and Victor Marchand appeared on the terrace. Clara was already on her knees, her white neck bared for the scimetar. The officer turned pale, but he ran with all his might.

"The general grants your life if you will marry me," he said to her in a low voice.

The Spanish girl cast upon the officer a look of pride and contempt.

"Go on, Juanito!" she said, in a deep voice, and her head rolled at Victor's feet.

The Marquise de Legañès made one convulsive movement as she heard that sound; it was the only sign she gave of sorrow.

"Am I placed right this way, my good Juanito?" asked the little Manuelo of his brother.

"Ah! you are weeping, Mariquita!" said Juanito to his sister.

"Yes," she said, "I think of you, my poor Juanito; how lonely you will be without us."

Soon the grand figure of the marquis came forward. He looked at the blood of his children; he turned to the mute and motionless spectators, and said in a strong voice, stretching his hands toward Juanito, —

"Spaniards! I give my son my fatherly blessing! Now, Marquis, strike, without fear — you are without reproach."

But when Juanito saw his mother approach him, supported by the priest, he cried out: "She bore me!"

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A cry of horror broke from all present. The noise of the feast and the jovial laughter of the officers ceased at that terrible clamor. The marquise comprehended that Juanito's courage was exhausted, and springing with one bound over the parapet, she was dashed to pieces on the rocks below. A sound of admiration rose. Juanito had fallen senseless.

"General," said an officer, who was half drunk, "Marchand has just told me the particulars of that execution down there. I will bet you never ordered it."

"Do you forget, messieurs," cried General G—t—r, "that five hundred French families are plunged in affliction, and that we are now in Spain? Do you wish to leave our bones in its soil?"

After that allocution, no one, not even a sub-lieutenant, had the courage to empty his glass.

In spite of the respect with which he is surrounded, in spite of the title El Verdugo (the executioner) which the King of Spain bestowed as a title of nobility on the Marquis de Legañès, he is a prey to sorrow; he lives in solitude, and is seldom seen. Overwhelmed with the burden of his noble crime, he seems to await with impatience the birth of a second son, which will give him the right to rejoin the Shades who ceaselessly accompany him.

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THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.

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TO THE READER.

At the beginning of the author's literary life, a friend, long since dead, gave him the subject of this Study, which, later, he found in a collection of tales, published in the early part of this century. It is, as he conjectures, a fantastic conception due to Hoffman of Berlin, published perhaps in some German almanac and forgotten among his works by the publishers. The Comedy of Human Life is sufficiently rich in original inventions to allow the author to confess an innocent loan; like the good la Fontaine, he has used, in his own manner, and without knowing that he did so, a tale already told.

This is not one of those grotesque histories in fashion about 1830, when authors invented atrocities to please young girls. When you reach the parricide of Don Juan, try to imagine what conduct would be pursued under analogous circumstances by honest folk who, in the nineteenth century take money for annuities relying on a catarrh, or life-lease a house to an old woman for the rest of her days. Would they resuscitate their deceased annuitants? I wish that a jury of conscience-weighers would inquire into the degree of likeness which exists between Don Juan and those fathers who marry their children on the score of "expectations." Does human society, which advances — if we believe certain philosophers — in the path of progress, consider the art of counting upon death a step in that path? This art, or science, has created honorable occupations by means of which men live on death. It is the business of certain persons to hope for a decease; they crouch

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every morning upon a corpse; it is their pillow by night, they brood upon it like a hen upon her eggs, — witness coadjutors, cardinals, substitutes, tontineers, etc. Add to these, other persons who hasten to buy a property the price of which is beyond their means, and who reckon logically and coldly the chances of life which still remain to their fathers and their mothers-in-law, saying to themselves: "Three years hence I shall certainly inherit thus and so, and then —" A murderer disgusts us less than a spy. The murderer has yielded perhaps to a mad impulse, he may repent and redeem himself; but a spy is always a spy, — a spy day and night, in bed, at table, everywhere; he is vile at all times. What is a murderer, therefore, when vile as the spy is vile? Well, do you not see in the bosom of society a crowd of human beings led by our laws, by our customs, by our morals, to think incessantly of the death of their relations and to wish for it? They weigh the value of a coffin as they bargain for shawls for their wives, as they go up the steps of a theatre, as they wish for a box at the opera and long for a carriage. They meet eyes they fain would close, which open every morning to the light, like those of Bartolommeo Belvedere in this Study. God alone knows the number of parricides committed in thought.

Imagine a man having to pay an annuity of three thousand francs to an old woman, both of them living in the country, separated only by a rivulet, but sufficiently apart to hate each other cordially without failing in the social conventions, which put a mask on the faces of two brothers one of whom is heir to the entailed estate, the other to the younger son's portion only. European civilization rests on Heredity as on a pivot; it would be folly to suppress it; but could we not, as in so many of the machines which are the pride of our age, improve and perfect its running gear?

If the author here preserves the old-fashioned formula, "To the Reader," it is that he may place in this dedication

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a remark relative to certain of these Studies, and more particularly to this one. Each of these compositions is based on an Idea, more or less novel, the expression of which seems to him useful. He may, in fact, claim priority for certain ideas and certain thoughts which have now passed into the domain of literature and have even become truisms. The dates of the earliest publication of each Study can alone prove the justice of this claim.

Print gives us many an unknown friend; and what a friend is a reader! — we have personal friends who never read a a word of our writings! The author hopes to pay his debt of gratitude in dedicating this work

DIIS IGNOTIS.

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"In a sumptuous palace at Ferrara, on a winter's evening, Don Juan Belvedere was entertaining at supper a prince of the House of Este."

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THE ELIXIR OF LIFE.

In a sumptuous palace at Ferrara, on a winter's evening, Don Juan Belvedere was entertaining at supper a prince of the house of Este. In those days such fêtes were marvellous spectacles, which the royal wealth and power of the great seigneurs could alone command.

Seated around a table lighted by perfumed candles, seven joyous women were exchanging gay remarks among admirable works of art, the dazzling marble of which detached itself from panels of red stucco and contrasted finely with the tones of a Turkey carpet. Gowned in satin and sparkling with gold and jewels, less bright, however, than their eyes, they all related vivid passions as diverse as the styles of their various beauties. They did not differ in topics or in ideas; but variations of air, looks, gesture, accent, gave to their words a libertine, lascivious, melancholy, or jeering character.

One seemed to say: "My beauty can warm the hearts of old men."

Another: "I love to lie couched on cushions and dream with passion of those who adore me."

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A third (novice at such fêtes, she tried to blush): "In my heart I feel remorse. I am Catholic and I fear hell. But I love you, oh! so much, so much that I can sacrifice to *you* eternity."

The fourth, draining a cup of Chio wine, seemed to cry: "All hail to gayety! I take a new existence from every dawn! Forgetful of the past, each day I exhaust a life of joy, a life of love!"

The woman seated next to Belvedere looked at him with flaming eye. She was silent, but that eye said: "I will trust no *bravi* to kill my lover, if he abandons me." Then she laughed, but her convulsive hand crushed a golden comfit-box, marvellously chased.

"When will you be grand-duke?" asked the sixth, addressing the prince, with an expression of murderous joy in her teeth, the delirium of a bacchante in her eyes.

"And you, when will your father die?" said the seventh, laughing, and flinging her bouquet at Don Juan with intoxicating sportiveness. This was a fresh young girl, whose way it was to jest of sacred things.

"Ah! don't speak of that," cried the young and handsome Don Juan. "There is but one eternal father in the world, and an evil fate has given him to me."

The seven courtesans of Ferrara, the friends of Don Juan, and the prince himself, gave a cry of horror. Two hundred years later, under Louis XV., people of taste would have laughed at that outburst. But perhaps at the beginning of an orgy minds are still lucid. In spite of the blaze of lights, the cry of passions, the glitter of gold and silver, the fumes of wine, in spite of the contemplation of beautiful women, perhaps

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there still remained in the depths of all hearts a little of that shame for things human and divine which struggle one against another until the orgy drowns all compunction in floods of wine. That moment came; the flowers were crushed, the eyes stupefied, drunkenness, to use Rabelais' expression, laid hold of all, to their very sandals.

At this moment a door opened; and, as at Belshazzar's feast, God made known his presence. He came in the semblance of an old servant with white hair, and trembling limbs, and shrunken brow, who entered with a sad air, and withered with a look the garlands, the gold and silver cups, the pyramids of fruit, the glitter of the feast, the crimson of the startled faces, the colors of the cushions on which the white arms of the women rested. The old man threw a veil of crape upon this scene of folly as he said, in a hollow voice, —

"Monsieur, your father is dying."

Don Juan rose, and made a sign to his guests which might be interpreted, "Excuse me, for this does n't happen every day."

The death of a father often overtakes young men amid the splendors of life, and the mad ideas of an orgy. Death is as sudden in its caprices as a courtesan in her disdains; but, more faithful, she deceives none.

When Don Juan had closed the door of the room, and was walking along a cold dark gallery to his father's apartment, he endeavored to call up a suitable countenance; for, remembering his rôle of son, he had flung down his gayety with his napkin. The night was dark; the silent servitor, who conducted the

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young man to the mortuary chamber, scarcely lighted the way; so that DEATH, assisted by the cold, the silence, the obscurity, perhaps by a reaction from drunkenness, was able to slip a few reflections into the mind of this spendthrift; he questioned his life, and was thoughtful, like a man with a case to be tried on his way to court.

Bartolommeo Belvedere, father of Don Juan, was an old man in the nineties, who had spent the greater part of his life in the transactions of commerce. Having scoured the talismanic countries of the Orient, he had there acquired enormous wealth, and knowledge more precious, he said, than gold or diamonds, for which he now cared nothing. "I prefer a tooth to a ruby, and power to money," he said, smiling.

A kind father, he liked to hear Don Juan relate his youthful pranks, and he would say, with a jovial air, lavishing gold upon his son: "My dear boy, commit no follies but those which amuse you." He was one of those rare old men who take pleasure in seeing youth; his paternal love, kept his own decay out of sight by the contemplation of so brilliant an existence.

At the age of sixty, Bartolommeo had fallen in love with an angel of peace and beauty. Don Juan was the sole fruit of this tardy and short-lived affection. For the last fifteen years the old man had mourned his beloved Juana. His numerous servants and Don Juan attributed to this sorrow the singular habits the old man had since contracted. Retreating to the most inconvenient wing of his palace, Bartolommeo seldom went out, and Don Juan himself was not admitted to his father's apartment unless he obtained permission.

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When this voluntary anchorite went about the palace or the streets of Ferrara he seemed to be looking for something that he wanted; he walked with a dreamy, undecided, pre-occupied air, like a man at war with some idea or memory. While the son gave sumptuous feasts, and made the palace resound with the echoes of his amusements, while horses pawed in the courtyard, and pages quarrelled over dice on the steps, Bartolommeo in his comfortless rooms ate seven ounces of bread a day, and drank water. If he sometimes ordered a chicken it was only that he might give the bones to a black spaniel, his faithful companion. He never complained of the racket in the house. When, during his illness, the blowing of horns and the barking of dogs kept him from sleeping, he merely said, "Ah! there's Don Juan returning."

Never on this earth was there a more indulgent and accommodating father; consequently, the young Belvedere, accustomed to treat him without ceremony, had all the defects of a spoiled child. He lived with Bartolommeo precisely as a capricious courtesan lives with an old lover, excusing his impertinence with a smile, selling his good-humor, and allowing himself to be loved. Recalling, in a flash of thought, the memory of past years, Don Juan recognized that it would be difficult indeed to find his father's kindness in fault. In the depths of his heart he felt some stirrings of remorse; as he walked along the gallery he came near forgiving his father for having lived so long. He returned to a sense of filial piety, as a robber becomes an honest man under the expectation of enjoying a million, successfully stolen.

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Presently the young man entered the cold and lofty rooms of his father's apartment. Passing through the damp atmosphere, breathing the heavy air and the rancid odor of old tapestries and musty closets full of dust, he reached the room of the old man and stood before his nauseous bed beside the half extinguished fire. A lamp placed on a gothic table cast, at irregular intervals, streaks of light more or less strong upon the bed, showing the face of the old man in various differing aspects. A cold wind whistling through the ill-closed windows and the snow blown against the panes made a low dull noise.

This scene was so violent a contrast to that Don Juan had just quitted that he could not help shuddering. Then he turned cold when, as he neared the bed, a stronger flicker of light, blown by a puff of wind, illumined his father's head. The features were distorted; the skin, clinging tightly to the bones, had a greenish tinge which the whiteness of the pillow on which the head of the old man lay seemed to make more horrible. The half-opened mouth, drawn with pain and denuded of teeth, gave vent to sighs, the lugubrious energy of which combined with the howling of the tempest.

In spite of these signs of dissolution, incredible power shone from that head. A superior spirit was combating Death. The eyes, hollow with illness, had a singular fixity. It seemed as if Bartolommeo sought to kill, with his dying glance, an enemy seated at the foot of his bed. That glance, fixed and cold, was all the more awful because the head remained immovable like those skulls that we see on a doctor's table. The

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body, plainly and wholly defined under the sheets of the bed, showed that the limbs of the old man had the same rigidity. All of him was dead, except the eyes. Even the sounds which came from his mouth had a certain mechanical tone in them.

Don Juan was conscious of a feeling of shame in standing beside the bed of his dying father with the flowers of a courtesan on his breast, and the odors of wine and feasting clinging to him.

"You were amusing yourself?" said the old man, beholding his son.

At that instant, the pure, clear notes of an opera-singer, delighting the guests and sustained by the chords of a lute with which she accompanied herself, rose above the howl of the tempest, and echoed through the spaces of the chamber of death. Don Juan longed to stifle that cruel answer to his father's question.

Bartolommeo said, "I am not displeased with you, my son."

That gentle speech was painful to Don Juan, who could not forgive his father for such cutting kindness.

"What remorse for me, father!" he said hypocritically.

"Poor Juanino," continued the dying man, in a failing voice, "I have always been so kind to you that you could never have desired my death."

"Oh!" cried Don Juan, "would it were possible to bring you back to life by the sacrifice of half my own! Those things can always be said," thought the spendthrift; "it is just as if I offered the world to my mistress."

The thought had no sooner crossed his mind than

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the old spaniel barked. That intelligent voice made Don Juan tremble; he believed that the dog understood him.

"I knew, my son, that I could count on you," said the dying man. "I shall live. Your wish will be granted. I shall live; but without depriving you of the days that belong to you."

"He is delirious," thought Don Juan, adding, aloud, "Yes, my precious father, you will live indeed, as long as I live, for your image will be ever in my heart."

"That is not the life I mean," said the old noble, gathering all his strength to rise in his bed; for a sudden suspicion, such as are born only under the pillows of the dying, came to him. "Listen, my son," he continued, his voice enfeebled by this last effort: "I have no more desire to die than you have to give up mistresses, wine, horses, falcons, dogs, or gold — "

"I believe that," thought the son, kneeling down beside the bed, and kissing one of the cadaverous hands of the old man. "But," he said aloud, "father, dear father, we must both submit to the will of God."

"God is myself," replied the old man, mumbling.

"Do not blaspheme!" cried the young man, seeing the threatening look which was settling on his father's features. "Keep yourself from that! you have received extreme unction, and never should I console myself if you were now to die in a state of sin."

"Will you listen to me?" cried the dying man, his mouth snapping.

Don Juan said no more. A horrible silence reigned. Through the dull hissing of the snow against the panes came the tones of the lute and the charming voice,

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faint as the dawn of a coming day. The dying father smiled.

"I thank you for having invited that singer," he said, "to make music for me. A fête! young and beautiful women, fair, with black eyes! All the pleasures of life! Keep them here; make them stay; I am about to be born again."

"The delirium is at its height," thought Don Juan.

"I have discovered a means of resuscitation. It is at hand. Look in the drawer of that table; you can open it by touching a spring in the claw of the griffin."

"I have found it, father."

"Well then, take out a little vial of rock-crystal."

"Here it is."

"I have spent twenty years in —"

At that moment the old man felt his end approaching; he gathered up all his energy to say: "As soon as I have drawn my last breath, rub me all over with that water, and I shall live again."

"There is very little of it," said the young man.

Bartolommeo could no longer speak, but he still had power to hear and see; at his son's words, he turned his head to Don Juan with an awful and convulsive motion; his neck remained stretched, like that of a marble figure which a sculptor has made to look to one side; his staring eyes took on a hideous immobility. He was dead, — dead in losing his last illusion. Seeking an asylum in the heart of his son, he found a grave deeper than those in which men bury their dead. His hair, quivering with his dying horror, and the convulsed eyes still spoke. A father was rising with rage from his sepulchre, and asking vengeance of God!

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"There! the old man is ended," said Don Juan.

Hastening to hold the little vial to the light, as the drinker consults his bottle at the end of a meal, he had not observed the whitening of his father's eye. The dog, with open mouth, gazed alternately at his dead master and at the mysterious elixir, just as Don Juan himself now looked from the vial to his father. The lamp still cast its flickering flame. The silence was profound; the lute was silent. Don Juan quivered, for he thought his father moved. Intimidated by the rigid glare of those accusing eyes, he closed them, as he might have closed a shutter that was flapping in the wind. He stood erect, motionless, lost in thought.

Suddenly, a rasping voice, like that of a rusty spring, broke the silence. Don Juan, startled, almost let fall the vial. A cold sweat, colder than the steel of a dagger, started from his pores. A cock, of painted wood, rose to the top of a timepiece, and crowed three times. It was one of these ingenious mechanisms by which the learned men of that day waked themselves at the hour they wished to begin their studies. The dawn was reddening the windows. Don Juan had passed ten hours in reflection. The old clock was more faithful in rousing him than he was in fulfilling his duty to Bartolommeo. The mechanism of the clock was made up of wood, pulleys, cords, and wheels; whereas his mechanism was that peculiar to man, and called a heart.

In order not to run the risk of losing that mysterious liquid, the sceptical Don Juan replaced it in the drawer of the little gothic table. At this solemn moment he heard a low tumult in the gallery; confused voices,

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smothered laughter, elastic steps, the rustling of silken stuffs, in short, the noise of a joyous group of persons, endeavoring, nevertheless, to restrain themselves. The door opened, and the prince, Don Juan's friends, the seven courtesans, and the prima donnas, in all the fantastic disorder of revellers surprised by the dawn when the sun begins to struggle with the paling light of tapers, entered the room. They came to offer to the young heir the conventional consolations.

"Oh! oh! that poor Don Juan seems to be taking this death quite seriously," said the prince in the ear of the Brambilla.

"But his father was a very kind man," she replied.

The nocturnal meditations of Don Juan had left so striking an expression upon his features that silence was imposed upon the group. The men stood motionless. The women, their lips parched with wine, their cheeks marbled with kisses on their rouge, fell on their knees and began to pray. Don Juan could not keep himself from shuddering as he saw these splendors of youth, beauty, power, joy, laughter, song, all life personified, prostrate before Death. But, in that adorable Italy, debauchery and religion couple so strangely, that religion is debauchery, and debauchery religion. The prince pressed the young heir's hand affectionately; then, all the other faces having offered, simultaneously, the same grimace of mingled mourning and indifference, the strange phantasmagoria withdrew, leaving the old room empty. An image indeed of life!

As they went down the stairs, the prince remarked to la Rivabarella:

"Who would have thought Don Juan a mere boaster of impiety? — why, he loved his father!"

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"Did you notice that black dog?" asked the Brambilla.

"He is now immensely rich," remarked Bianca Cavatolino, smiling.

"What do I care!" cried the proud Veronese, she who had crushed the bonbonniere.

"Why do you say that?" cried the prince. "With all his money he can be as much a prince as I."

Don Juan, at first, swaying in the balance with a thousand thoughts, was undecided as to his course. Towards evening, after taking counsel of the treasure amassed by his father, he returned to the chamber of death, his soul full of an awful egotism. He found all the servants of the establishment in the room, engaged in arranging the ornaments of the state bed, on which the "late monseigneur" was to lie the next day in a splendid mortuary chamber, — an interesting spectacle, which all Ferrara would flock to witness. Don Juan made a sign, and the servants stopped their work, confused and trembling.

"Leave me here, alone," he said in a strained voice. "None of you can return until I leave the room."

When the steps of the old servitor, who was the last to go, sounded but faintly on the tiled flooring, Don Juan hurriedly locked the door; then, sure of being alone, he exclaimed: —

"I will try!"

The body of Bartolommeo was lying on a long table. To hide from all eyes the hideous spectacle of a corpse that resembled in its extreme emaciation and decrepitude a skeleton, the embalmers had laid the body in a sheet which enveloped the whole of it except the head.

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This mummy lay in the centre of the room; the sheet, naturally supple, vaguely defining its sharp, stiff outlines. The face was already marked with violet spots, showing the necessity of finishing the embalmment.

In spite of the scepticism with which he was provided, Don Juan trembled as he took the cork from the magic vial of rock-crystal. He was even compelled to pause a moment when he came near the head, for he found himself shuddering. But this young man had been early and knowingly corrupted by the morals of a dissolute court. A suggestion, worthy of the Duke of Urbino, came into his mind, and gave him a courage which was spurred moreover by eager curiosity; it seemed as if some demon had whispered the words which sounded in his heart: *Wet one eye.*

He took a linen cloth, moistened it sparingly in the precious liquid, and passed it lightly over the right eyelid of the corpse. The eye opened.

"Ha! ha!" said Don Juan, "it is true!" and he clasped the vial in his hand, as we clasp in our dreams a branch which holds us suspended over a precipice.

He saw an eye full of life, the eye of a child in a dead man's head; the light flickered on its youthful fluidity; protected by beautiful black lashes, it sparkled like those solitary gleams which the traveller sees in desert regions of a winter's night. That flaming eye seemed desirous of springing upon Don Juan; it thought, accused, condemned, threatened, judged, spoke; it cried, it bit. All human passions stirred within it, — the tenderest supplications, the anger of a king, the love of a young girl asking mercy of an executioner, the solemn look that a man casts on men

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as he ascends the last step of a scaffold. So much of life shone in that mere fragment of life that Don Juan recoiled in terror. He walked about the room, not daring to look again at the eye, though he saw it on the floor, on the tapestries. The room was sown with spots of fire, life, intelligence. On all sides shone that eye, which barked, as it were, after him.

"He might have lived a hundred years!" cried the young man, involuntarily, at the moment when, brought back before his father by some devilish influence, he again contemplated that luminous vital spark.

Suddenly the intelligent eyelid closed, and opened again instantly. Had a voice replied to him "Yes!" Don Juan would not have been more terrified.

"What shall I do?" he thought.

He had the courage to try to close the eyelid. His efforts were vain.

"Shall I crush it? Would that be parricide?" he asked himself.

"Yes," said the eye winking with awful irony.

"Ha! ha!" exclaimed Don Juan, "there 's sorcery here."

He went nearer to the eye to crush it. A large tear rolled down the cheek of the corpse and fell on the young man's hand.

"It is burning!" he cried, sitting down.

The struggle fatigued him, as though he had been wrestling, like Jacob, with an angel.

At last he rose, saying to himself, "Provided there is no blood!"

Then, collecting all the courage that is needed to be dastardly, he crushed the eye, pushing it in with a

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cloth, but not looking at it. An unexpected, but terrible moan was heard; the poor spaniel expired, howling.

"Could he have known the secret?" thought Don Juan, looking at the faithful animal.

Don Juan Belvedere, was considered a pious son. He erected a marble monument over the grave of his father, and gave the execution of the figures to the most distinguished sculptors of Italy. He was not perfectly tranquil in mind until the day when the statue of his father, kneeling before Religion, was placed in all its enormous weight upon that grave, in the depths of which he buried the sole remorse that ever entered his heart in moments of physical lassitude.

In estimating and using the vast wealth amassed by the old orientalist, Don Juan became a miser; had he not two lives to live and to provide for? His deeply scrutinizing gaze penetrated the principle of social life and grasped the world the better because he saw it across a tomb. He analyzed both men and things, in order to be done, once for all, with the Past, represented by History; with the Present, embodied by Law; with the Future, unveiled by Religions. He took both soul and matter, flung them into a retort, found nothing, and became henceforth Don Juan!

Master of the illusions of life, he sprang, young and splendid, into life, despising society but grasping it. His happiness could never be that burgher contentment which feeds on periodical *bouilli*, enjoys a warming-pan in winter, a lamp at night, a new pair of slippers tri-monthly. No, he seized existence as a monkey catches a nut, — not playing with it long, but cunningly

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peeling off the outside husk of the fruit to get at the luscious meat within. Poesy and the sublime transports of human passion never touched him. He did not commit the mistake of those strong men who, imagining that little souls believe in great ones, attempt to exchange their knowledge of the future against the small change of ideas that are limited to one life. He could walk, like them, with his feet on the earth and his head in the skies; but he preferred to sit down, and wither with kisses the tender, fresh, and perfumed lips of women; for, like Death, wherever he passed, he took all without decency, — seeking the love of possession, the oriental love with its long and facile pleasures. Loving the sex only in the woman, sarcasm became the natural trend of his mind. When his mistresses used their passion to rise to the skies and lose themselves in the bosom of intoxicating ecstasy, Don Juan followed them grave, expansive, sincere as a German student can make himself; but he said *I*, while his mistress, lost in her emotions, was saying *we*. He knew well how to let a woman win him. He was always strong enough to lead her to believe that he trembled like a schoolboy making love to his first partner. Yet he knew how to roar at the right time, and to draw his powerful sword on all Commanders. There was always a sneer in his simplicity and a grin in his tears; for he could weep as cleverly as a woman when she says to her husband, "Give me a carriage or I shall die of consumption."

To merchants, the world is a cargo, or a pile of notes in circulation; to most young men it is a woman; to some women it is a man; to certain minds it is a

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salon, a coterie, a quarter, a town; to Don Juan, the universe was Himself. A model of grace and noble bearing, seductive in mind and wit, he tied his bark to every shore; but, while letting himself be led, he never went beyond the point he chose to go. The longer he lived the more he doubted. Examining men, he often discerned that courage was temerity; prudence, cowardice; generosity, shrewdness; justice a crime; delicacy, foolishness; honesty, constitutional; and, by a singular fatality, he perceived that the men who were truly honest, delicate, just, generous, prudent, and brave obtained little or no consideration among their fellows.

"What a cold joke the world is!" he said to himself. "It certainly can't come from a God."

Then, renouncing the idea of a better world, he lifted his hat to no sacred name, and considered the stone saints standing in the church as works of Art. Understanding the mechanism of human society, he offended no prejudices, but he slipped round social laws with the grace and wit so well described in his interview with Monsieur Dimanche. He was, in short, the type of Molière's Don Juan, Goethe's Faust, Byron's Manfred, and Mathurin's Melmoth, — great images drawn by the greatest geniuses of Europe, to which the harmonies of Mozart and, possibly, the lyre of Rubini are not lacking, — terrible images, which the principle of evil, inherent in man, will make eternal; a few copies appearing from age to age, whether the type returns to parley with mankind incarnate in Mirabeau; whether it is content to act in silence like Bonaparte, or to compress the universe into a sarcasm

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like the mighty Rabelais, or whether, again, it jeers at men instead of insulting things, like Richelieu, or — better still, perhaps, — whether it scoffs both at men and things, like the most celebrated of our ambassadors. But the profound genius of Don Juan Belvedere was the type, in advance, of all those beings. He jeered at all things. His life was a scoffing scorn of men and things, institutions and ideas. As for eternity, he had talked familiarly on one occasion with Pope Julius the Second; at the close of which conversation he said, laughing, —

"If one must absolutely choose, I would rather believe in God than in the Devil: power united to goodness has certainly more resources than the Genius of Evil can ever have."

"Yes," said the pope, "but God requires repentance in this world."

"You are always thinking of your Indulgences," replied Belvedere. "As for me, I have another existence in reserve in which I can repent for the sins of my present life."

"Ah! if that is how you consider old age," cried the Pope, "you risk being canonized."

"After your elevation to the papacy nothing is surprising," returned Don Juan.

Whereupon they went to watch the workmen employed in building the vast basilica dedicated to Saint Peter.

"Saint Peter is the man of genius, who constituted for us our double power," remarked the pope to Don Juan. "He deserves this monument. But sometimes, in the night, I think how a deluge may wipe it

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out, and the whole thing will have to be done over again."

Don Juan and the pope began to laugh, — they understood each other. A fool would have gone the next day, to jest with Julius the Second among the Raffaelle frescos, or in the delightful Villa Madama; but Belvedere went to see him officiate pontifically, in order to convince himself of the pope's doubts. In a debauch, della Rovere might have retracted and preached the Apocalypse.

However, this legend is not undertaken to furnish facts for those who may want to write the memoirs of Don Juan. It is intended to prove to honest men that he did not die in his duel with a Stone, as some lithographers have endeavored to make us believe.

When Don Juan was sixty years of age, he went to live in Spain. There, in his old age, he married a young and lovely Andalusian. But, as a matter of calculation, he was neither a good father nor a good husband. He had observed that men were never so tenderly loved as by the women they did not care for. Donna Elvira, piously brought up by an old aunt in the depths of Andalusia, in a castle not far from San-Lucar, was all grace and devotion. Don Juan, feeling certain that this young girl as a wife would struggle long against a passion before yielding to it, calculated that she would probably remain virtuous until his death. This was a pleasant sort of serious jest, a game of chess, as it were, which he thought would amuse him for the rest of his present life.

Warned by the many mistakes committed by his father, Don Juan resolved to make all, even the

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slightest actions of his old age conduce to the success of the drama which was to be accomplished on his deathbed. The greater part of his enormous wealth was buried in the vaults of his palace at Ferrara, where he seldom went. The rest of his fortune he turned into an annuity in order to make the duration of his life the interest of his wife and son, — a species of cheatery which his father would have done well to practise upon him. But this Machiavellian speculation was not at all necessary. His son, Filippo Belvedere, was as conscientiously religious as his father was impious, — in virtue, perhaps, of the proverb, "To a miserly father, a prodigal son."

The Abbé de San-Lucar had been chosen by Don Juan to direct the consciences of the duchess and his son. This ecclesiastic was a saintly man, of a fine figure admirably proportioned, with handsome black eyes, a head like Tiberius, worn with fasting, white with penance, and daily tempted, like all recluses. Don Juan may have hoped, perhaps, to kill a monk before he came to the end of his first lease of life. But, whether it was that the abbé was as strong in his way as Don Juan in his, or that Donna Elvira had prudence or more virtue than Spain has accorded to women, Don Juan was constrained to pass the remainder of his days like an old country rector, without scandal of any kind. Sometimes he could get a little pleasure in blaming his wife and son for neglecting the duties of religion; for he imperatively required that they should fulfil the strictest obligations imposed by the court of Rome. In fact, he was never so happy now as when he listened to the gallant Abbé de San-

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Lucar, Donna Elvira, and Filippo discussing a case of conscience.

But, in spite of the incessant care which Signor Don Juan Belvedere bestowed upon his person, the days of his decrepitude arrived; with that age of pain, came cries of impotence, cries the more distressing because the recollections of his fiery youth and his voluptuous maturity were rich and strong. This man, whose highest delight in sarcasm was to force others to believe in laws and principles at which he scoffed, now slept every night on a "perhaps." This model of good taste, this duke, vigorous in an orgy, superb at court, gracious before women whose hearts he twisted as a peasant twists an osier twig, this man of genius was afflicted with an obstinate catarrh, an importunate sciatica and a brutal gout. His teeth were leaving him, one by one, as women leave at night a deserted ball-room. His bold hand trembled; his lithe legs tottered; and at last, one evening, his throat was clutched by the hooked and icy fingers of apoplexy.

After that fatal day he became morose and hard. He quarrelled with the devotion of his wife and son, declaring that their delicate and touching care was only given so tenderly because he had put his fortune into an annuity. Elvira and Filippo shed bitter tears and redoubled their attentions to the malignant old man, whose cracked voice became affectionate as he said:

"My friends, my dear wife, you forgive me, do you not? I torment you, I know. Alas! oh God! why dost thou use me to be a curse to these dear beings? I, who ought to be their joy, I am their scourge."

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In this way he chained them to his pillow; making them forget whole months of impatience and cruelty in an hour, when he showered them with the treasures of his lying tenderness, — a paternal system which was infinitely more successful than that his father had practised towards him.

At last he reached a degree of illness when in order to get him into bed he had to be manœuvred like a felucca entering a dangerous channel. The day of his death arrived. This brilliant and sceptical personage, whose intelligence alone survived the most dreadful of all destructions, found himself between a doctor and a confessor — his two antipathies; but he was jovial with both of them. Was there not for him a dazzling existence behind the veil of the future? Upon that veil, of lead for others, diaphanous for him, the lightsome, ravishing delights of youth were casting playful shadows.

On a fine summer's evening Don Juan felt that death had come. The sky of Spain was exquisitely pure, the orange-trees perfumed the air, the stars distilled their bright, cool light, all nature gave him pledges of his certain resurrection; a son, pious and obedient, was watching him with love and absolute respect. Toward eleven o'clock at night Don Juan desired to be left alone with that guileless being.

"Filippo," he said, in so tender and affectionate a voice that the young man trembled and wept with joy. Never had that inflexible father so pronounced his name: Filippo! — "Listen to me, my son," said the dying man. "I am a great sinner. Therefore have I thought, all my life, about my death. In my youth

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I was the friend of the great pope, Julius the Second. That illustrious pontiff feared that the excessive excitability of my senses might lead me to commit some mortal sin between the moment when I received the holy oils and that of my actual death. He therefore made me a present of a vial containing holy water brought from the sacred places of the desert. I have kept the secret of his gift of a treasure of the Church; but I am authorized to reveal *in articulo mortis* this mystery to my son. You will find that vial in the drawer of the gothic table which never leaves my bedside. The precious liquid may serve you too, my beloved Filippo. Swear to me, on your eternal salvation to execute my orders faithfully."

Filippo looked at his father. Don Juan knew too well the expression of all human sentiments not to die in peace on the faith of that look, as his father had died in despair on the faith of his.

"You deserve another father," said Don Juan. "I must confess to you, my dear child, that at the moment when the worthy Abbé de San-Lucar administered to me the viaticum, I was thinking of the incompatibility of there being two powers in the world, so omnipotent as those of God and the Devil —"

"Oh! father! —"

"And I said to myself, 'When Satan makes peace with God, he ought, unless he is a great scoundrel, to stipulate for the pardon of his adherents.' That thought pursues me. I shall therefore go to hell, my son, unless you do the thing that I shall tell you to do."

"Tell it to me quickly, father."

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"As soon as my eyes are closed in death," continued Don Juan, "a few minutes hence perhaps, you must take my body, warm as it is, and lay it on that table in the middle of this room. Then you will put out the lamp; the light of the stars will suffice for what you have to do. You must take off my clothes, and then — while reciting a *Pater* and an *Ave*, and lifting your soul to God — you must moisten with that sacred water, first my eyes, my lips, and all my head and then, successively, my body and my limbs. But, my dear son, the power of God is great; you must not be surprised at any miracle he may do — "

Here Don Juan, feeling that death was upon him, added in a terrible voice, "Hold the vial fast!"

Then he gently expired in the arms of his son, whose abundant tears flowed upon that livid and ironical face.

It was nearly midnight when Don Filippo Belvedere placed the body of his father on the table. After kissing that threatening brow and its gray hair, he extinguished the lamp. A soft light, produced by the moon, which cast fantastic gleams upon the meadows, enabled the pious youth to see, though indistinctly, the body of his father as something white in the midst of shadows. He dipped a cloth into the liquid, and, murmuring a prayer, he faithfully anointed that sacred head in the midst of the deepest silence. He heard indescribable quiverings, but he thought they were the playing of the breeze in the tree-tops. Next, he moistened the right arm, and having done so, he felt himself clasped around the neck by a young and vigorous arm, the arm of his father!

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The youth gave a dreadful cry, and let fall the vial, which broke, and the liquid was lost.

The servants of the château rushed in with lights. The cries had alarmed and surprised them, as if the trumpet of the last judgment were shaking the universe. In a moment the room was full of people. The crowd trembled when they saw Filippo insensible, but tightly held in the arm of his father twined round his neck, and then, amazing sight! all the people saw the head of Don Juan, as young, as beautiful as that of Antinous; a head with black hair, and brilliant eyes and scarlet mouth, which moved in an awful manner struggling, ineffectually, to stir the corpse to which it was attached.

An old servant cried out, —

"Miracle!"

And all the Spaniards present repeated, —

"Miracle!"

Too pious to admit the possibility of magic, Donna Elvira sent at once for the Abbé de San-Lucar. When the prior saw the miracle with his own eyes, he resolved to profit by it, like a man of sense and an abbé who is not unwilling to increase his revenues. Declaring promptly that the Signor Don Juan would infallibly be canonized he appointed the ceremony of the apotheosis to take place in his convent, which in future, he said, would be named San-Juan de Lucar. At these words, the head grinned facetiously.

The Spanish taste for such solemnities is so well known that it cannot be difficult to imagine the piously fairy scene with which the abbey of San-Lucar celebrated the ascension of the blessed Don Juan Belvedera.

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Within a few days of the death of that illustrious signor, the miracle of his imperfect resurrection had been so thoroughly related from village to village through a circuit of more than a hundred and fifty miles around San-Lucar, that already it was like a comedy to see the curious crowds flocking along the roads; they came from all parts, allured by the thought of the Te Deum chanted by torchlight. The ancient mosque of the convent of San-Lucar, a marvellous edifice built by the Moors, the arches of which for three centuries had heard the name of Christ substituted for that of Allah, could not contain the mass of people that flocked to the ceremony. Pressed together like ants, the hidalgos, in their velvet mantles and armed with their swords, stood up around the columns, finding no place to bend their knees, which bent only in a church. Bewitching peasant-women, whose basques defined their lovable shapes, gave their arms to white-haired old men. Young men with fiery eyes, supported old women dressed for parade. Then came couples quivering with pleasure, girls brought by their betrothed, brides of the day before, children holding each other timidly by the hand. The whole community were there, rich in color, brilliant in contrasts, covered with flowers; making a soft tumult in the silence of the night.

The portals of the church were opened wide. Some who came too late to enter stayed outside, seeing from afar through the three great doors, a scene of which the fairy decorations of our modern operas can give but a faint idea. Devout persons and sinners, all eager to win the good graces of the new saint, lighted

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thousands of tapers in his honor throughout the vast building, selfish flames which, nevertheless, gave magic aspects to the edifice. The dark aisles, the columns and their capitals, the deep chapels brilliant with gold and silver, the galleries, the Saracenic openwork, the exquisite tracery of the delicate sculpture, all were defined in that abounding light like the capricious figures formed in the glow of a brasier. It was indeed an ocean of light, reaching at the farther end of the church to the gilded choir, within which rose the high altar, its glory rivalling that of the rising sun.

But the splendor of the golden lamps, the silver candelabra, the banners, the tassels, the saints and the *ex-votos*, paled before the glitter of the shrine in which lay the body of Don Juan. The body itself sparkled with jewels, flowers, crystals, diamonds, and plumes as white as the wings of seraphim; for the purpose of this ceremony, it took the place on the high altar of a picture of Christ. Around it shone numerous tapers, the flames of which rose high into the air in waves of light.

The worthy Abbé of San-Lucar, robed in pontifical vestments, his mitre adorned with precious stones, and bearing his rochet and his golden cross, sat king of the choir, on a chair of imperial luxury; in the midst of his clergy, — impassible old men, with silvery hair, robed in the finest albs, who surrounded him like the holy confessors, whom the painters group about the Father Eternal. The precentor and the dignitaries of the Chapter, decorated with the insignia of their various ecclesiastical vanities, came and went

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among the clouds of incense like stars rolling in the firmament.

When the hour of the triumph arrived, a peal of bells awoke the echoes in all the country round, and the vast assembly sent up to God the cry of praise, which opens the *Te Deum*. That sublime cry! Pure, light voices, the voices of women in ecstasy, mingled with the strong grave voices of men, thousands of voices, so powerful that the organ could not dominate their volume, notwithstanding the roaring of its pipes. Only the piercing notes of the choir children, and the heavy tones of the basses, suggested ideas of childhood and strength in that mighty concert of human voices, blending in the sentiment of praise: —

Te Deum laudamus!

From the bosom of that mass of kneeling men and women, rose the Chant like a light blazing suddenly at midnight; the silence was broken as it were by a thunder clap. The voices ascended on the clouds of incense, which cast their diaphanous bluish veils on the fantastic marvels of the Saracenic architecture. All was perfume, light, and melody.

At the moment when this music of love and gratitude rose high about the altar, Don Juan, perhaps too civil not to acknowledge it, and too wise not to perceive the sarcasm, replied with a terrifying laugh, and bowed with dignity in his shrine. But the devil having suddenly made him think that he ran great risk of being taken for an ordinary man, a saint, a Boniface, a Pantaleone, he disturbed that melody of love and praise with a howl in which a thousand voices of the devils in hell joined his. The earth

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praised; the heavens cursed; the church trembled to its old foundations.

"*Te Deum laudamus!*" chanted the vast assemblage.

"Go to the devil and all the devils, brute beasts that you are! God! God! *Carajos demonios*, animals, fools that you are with your old man God!"

And a torrent of imprecations rolled down from the shrine like the burning waves of Vesuvian lava.

"*Deus Sabaoth! Sabaoth!*" cried the multitude.

"You insult the majesty of hell!" shouted Don Juan, grinding his teeth.

Presently the living arm was thrust out above the shrine, threatening the assembly, with gestures of mingled despair and scorn.

"The saint is blessing us!" cried the old women, the children, the brides, and all the credulous folk.

This is how we are often befooled in our worship. The superior man scoffs at those who make obeisance to him, and sometimes he makes obeisance to those at whom he scoffs.

At the moment when the abbé, prostrating himself before the altar, intoned the invocation, *Sancte Johannis, ora pro nobis*, he heard distinctly from above him the words, "You rogue!"

"What is happening up there?" cried the sub-prior, observing that the shrine was shaking.

"The saint is playing the devil," replied the abbé.

At that instant the living head wrenched itself violently from the dead body, and fell upon the yellow skull of the officiating priest.

"Remember Donna Elvira!" cried the head, setting its teeth into that of the abbé.

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The latter uttered a dreadful cry, which disturbed the ceremony. All the priests rushed up and surrounded their sovereign.

"Idiot! will you say now, that there is a God?" cried the voice, as the abbé, bitten to the brain, expired.

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THE HATED SON.

To Madame la Baronne James Rothschild.

PART FIRST.

HOW THE MOTHER LIVED.

I.

A BEDROOM OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

On a winter's night, about two in the morning, the Comtesse Jeanne d'Hérouville felt such violent pains that in spite of her inexperience, she was conscious of an approaching confinement; and the instinct which makes us hope for ease in a change of posture induced her to sit up in her bed, either to study the nature of these new sufferings, or to reflect on her situation. She was a prey to cruel fears, — caused less by the dread of a first lying-in, which terrifies most women, than by certain dangers which awaited her child.

In order not to awaken her husband who was sleeping beside her, the poor woman moved with precautions which her intense terror made as minute as those of a prisoner endeavoring to escape. Though the pains became more and more severe, she ceased to feel

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them, so completely did she concentrate her strength on the painful effort of resting her two moist hands on the pillow and so turning her suffering body from a posture in which she could find no ease. At the slightest rustling of the huge green silk coverlet, under which she had slept but little since her marriage, she stopped as though she had rung a bell. Forced to watch the count, she divided her attention between the folds of the rustling stuff and a large swarthy face, the moustache of which was brushing her shoulder. When some noisier breath than usual left her husband's lips, she was filled with a sudden terror that revived the color driven from her cheeks by her double anguish.

The prisoner reaching the prison door in the dead of night and trying to noiselessly turn the key in a pitiless lock, was never more timidly bold.

When the countess had succeeded in rising to her seat without awakening her keeper, she made a gesture of childlike joy which revealed the touching naïveté of her nature. But the half-formed smile on her burning lips was quickly repressed; a thought came to darken that pure brow, and her long blue eyes resumed their sad expression. She gave a sigh and again laid her hands, not without precaution, on the fatal conjugal pillow. Then — as if for the first time since her marriage she found herself free in thought and action — she looked at the things around her, stretching out her neck with little darting motions like those of a bird in its cage. Seeing her thus, it was easy to divine that she had once been all gayety and light-heartedness, but that fate had suddenly mown down her hopes, and changed her ingenuous gayety to sadness.

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The chamber was one of those which, to this day octogenarian porters of old châteaus point out to visitors as "the state bedroom where Louis XIII. once slept." Fine pictures, mostly brown in tone, were framed in walnut, the delicate carvings of which were blackened by time. The rafters of the ceiling formed compartments adorned with arabesques in the style of the preceding century, which preserved the colors of the chestnut wood. These decorations, severe in tone, reflected the light so little that it was difficult to see their designs, even when the sun shone full into that long and wide and lofty chamber. The silver lamp, placed upon the mantel of the vast fireplace, lighted the room so feebly that its quivering gleam could be compared only to the nebulous stars which appear at moments through the dun gray clouds of an autumn night. The fantastic figures crowded on the marble of the fireplace, which was opposite to the bed, were so grotesquely hideous that she dared not fix her eyes upon them, fearing to see them move, or to hear a startling laugh from their gaping and twisted mouths.

At this moment a tempest was growling in the chimney, giving to every puff of wind a lugubrious meaning, — the vast size of the flue putting the hearth into such close communication with the skies above that the embers upon it had a sort of respiration; they sparkled and went out at the will of the wind. The arms of the family of Hérouville, carved in white marble with their mantle and supporters, gave the appearance of a tomb to this species of edifice, which formed a pendant to the bed, another erection raised to the glory of Hymen. Modern architects would have

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been puzzled to decide whether the room had been built for the bed or the bed for the room. Two cupids playing on the walnut headboard, wreathed with garlands, might have passed for angels; and columns of the same wood, supporting the tester were carved with mythological allegories, the explanation of which could have been found in either the Bible or Ovid's Metamorphoses. Take away the bed, and the same tester would have served in a church for the canopy of the pulpit or the seats of the wardens. The married pair mounted by three steps to this sumptuous couch, which stood upon a platform and was hung with curtains of green silk covered with brilliant designs called *ramages* — possibly because the birds of gay plumage there depicted were supposed to sing. The folds of these immense curtains were so stiff that in the semi-darkness they might have been taken for some metal fabric. On the green velvet hanging, adorned with gold fringes, which covered the foot of this lordly couch the superstition of the Comtes d'Hérouville had affixed a large crucifix, on which their chaplain placed a fresh branch of sacred box when he renewed at Easter the holy water in the basin at the foot of the cross.

On one side of the fireplace stood a large box or wardrobe of choice woods magnificently carved, such as brides receive even now in the provinces on their wedding day. These old chests, now so much in request by antiquaries, were the arsenals from which women drew the rich and elegant treasures of their personal adornment, — laces, bodices, high collars and ruffs, gowns of price, alms-purses, masks, gloves,

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veils, — in fact all the inventions of coquetry in the sixteenth century.

On the other side, by way of symmetry, was another piece of furniture, somewhat similar in shape, where the countess kept her books, papers, and jewels. Antique chairs covered with damask, a large and greenish mirror, made in Venice, and richly framed in a sort of rolling toilet-table, completed the furnishing of the room. The floor was covered with a Persian carpet, the richness of which proved the gallantry of the count; on the upper step of the bed stood a little table, on which the waiting-woman served every night in a gold or silver cup a drink prepared with spices.

After we have gone some way in life we know the secret influence exerted by places on the condition of the soul. Who has not had his darksome moments, when fresh hope has come into his heart from things that surrounded him? The fortunate, or the unfortunate man, attributes an intelligent countenance to the things among which he lives; he listens to them, he consults them — so naturally superstitious is he. At this moment the countess turned her eyes upon all these articles of furniture, as if they were living beings whose help and protection she implored; but the answer of that sombre luxury seemed to her inexorable.

Suddenly the tempest redoubled. The poor young woman could augur nothing favorable as she listened to the threatening heavens, the changes of which were interpreted in those credulous days according to the ideas or the habits of individuals. Suddenly she turned her eyes to the two arched windows at the end of the room;

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but the smallness of their panes and the multiplicity of the leaden lines did not allow her to see the sky and judge if the world were coming to an end, as certain monks, eager for donations, affirmed. She might easily have believed in such predictions, for the noise of the angry sea, the waves of which beat against the castle wall, combined with the mighty voice of the tempest, so that even the rocks appeared to shake. Though her sufferings were now becoming keener and less endurable, the countess dared not awaken her husband; but she turned and examined his features, as if despair were urging her to find a consolation there against so many sinister forebodings.

If matters were sad around the poor young woman, that face, notwithstanding the tranquillity of sleep, seemed sadder still. The light from the lamp, flickering in the draught, scarcely reached beyond the foot of the bed and illumined the count's head capriciously; so that the fitful movements of its flash upon those features in repose produced the effect of a struggle with angry thought. The countess was scarcely reassured by perceiving the cause of that phenomenon. Each time that a gust of wind projected the light upon the count's large face, casting shadows among its bony outlines, she fancied that her husband was about to fix upon her his two insupportably stern eyes.

Implacable as the war then going on between the Church and Calvinism, the count's forehead was threatening even while he slept. Many furrows, produced by the emotions of a warrior life, gave it a vague resemblance to the vermiculated stone which we see in the buildings of that period; his hair, like the whitish

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lichen of old oaks, gray before its time, surrounded without grace a cruel brow, where religious intolerance showed its passionate brutality. The shape of the aquiline nose, which resembled the beak of a bird of prey, the black and crinkled lids of the yellow eyes, the prominent bones of a hollow face, the rigidity of the wrinkles, the disdain expressed in the lower lip, were all expressive of ambition, despotism, and power, the more to be feared because the narrowness of the skull betrayed an almost total absence of intelligence, and a mere brute courage devoid of generosity. The face was horribly disfigured by a large transversal scar which had the appearance of a second mouth on the right cheek.

At the age of thirty-three the count, anxious to distinguish himself in that unhappy religious war the signal for which was given on Saint-Bartholomew's day, had been grievously wounded at the siege of Rochelle. The misfortune of this wound increased his hatred against the partisans of what the language of that day called "the Religion," but, by a not unnatural turn of mind, he included in that antipathy all handsome men. Before the catastrophe, however, he was so repulsively ugly that no lady had ever been willing to receive him as a suitor. The only passion of his youth was for a celebrated woman called La Belle Romaine. The distrust resulting from this new misfortune made him suspicious to the point of not believing himself capable of inspiring a true passion; and his character became so savage that when he did have some successes in gallantry he owed them to the terror inspired by his cruelty. The left hand of this

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terrible Catholic, which lay on the outside of the bed, will complete this sketch of his character. Stretched out as if to guard the countess, as a miser guards his hoard, that enormous hand was covered with hair so thick, it presented such a network of veins and projecting muscles, that it gave the idea of a branch of birch clasped with a growth of yellowing ivy.

Children looking at the count's face would have thought him an ogre, terrible tales of whom they knew by heart. It was enough to see the width and length of the space occupied by the count in the bed, to imagine his gigantic proportions. When awake, his gray eyebrows hid his eyelids in a way to heighten the light of his eye, which glittered with the luminous ferocity of a wolf skulking on the watch in a forest. Under his lion nose, with its flaring nostrils, a large and ill-kept moustache (for he despised all toilet niceties) completely concealed the upper lip. Happily for the countess, her husband's wide mouth was silent at this moment, for the softest sounds of that harsh voice made her tremble. Though the Comte d'Hérouville was barely fifty years of age, he appeared at first sight to be sixty, so much had the toils of war, without injuring his robust constitution, dilapidated him physically.

The countess, who was now in her nineteenth year, made a painful contrast to that large, repulsive figure. She was fair and slim. Her chestnut locks, threaded with gold, played upon her neck like russet shadows, and defined a face such as Carlo Dolce has painted for his ivory-toned madonnas, — a face which now seemed ready to expire under the increasing attacks of physical

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pain. You might have thought her the apparition of an angel sent from heaven to soften the iron will of the terrible count.

"No, he will not kill us!" she cried to herself mentally, after contemplating her husband for a long time. "He is frank, courageous, faithful to his word — faithful to his word!"

Repeating that last sentence in her thoughts, she trembled violently, and remained as if stupefied.

To understand the horror of her present situation, we must add that this nocturnal scene took place in 1591, a period when civil war raged throughout France, and the laws had no vigor. The excesses of the League, opposed to the accession of Henri IV., surpassed the calamities of the religious wars. License was so universal that no one was surprised to see a great lord kill his enemy in open day. When a military expedition, having a private object, was led in the name of the King or of the League, one or other of these parties applauded it. It was thus that Blagny, a soldier, came near becoming a sovereign prince at the gates of France. Sometime before Henri III.'s death, a court lady murdered a nobleman who had made offensive remarks about her. One of the king's minions remarked to him: —

"Hey! *vive Dieu!* sire, she daggered him finely!"

The Comte d'Hérouville, one of the most rabid royalists in Normandy, kept the part of that province which adjoins Brittany under subjection to Henri IV. by the rigor of his executions. The head of one of the richest families in France, he had considerably increased the revenues of his great estates by marrying seven months

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before the night on which this history begins, Jeanne de Saint-Savin, a young lady who, by a not uncommon chance in days when people were killed off like flies, had suddenly become the representative of both branches of the Saint-Savin family. Necessity and terror were the causes which led to this union. At a banquet given, two months after the marriage, to the Comte and Comtesse d'Hérouville, a discussion arose on a topic which in those days of ignorance was thought amusing: namely, the legitimacy of children coming into the world ten months after the death of their fathers, or seven months after the wedding day.

"Madame," said the count brutally, turning to his wife, "if you give me a child ten months after my death, I cannot help it; but be careful that you are not brought to bed in seven months!"

"What would you do then, old bear?" asked the young Marquis de Verneuil, thinking that the count was joking.

"I should wring the necks of mother and child!"

An answer so peremptory closed the discussion, imprudently started by a seigneur from Lower-Normandy. The guests were silent, looking with a sort of terror at the pretty Comtesse d'Hérouville. All were convinced that if such an event occurred, her savage lord would execute his threat.

The words of the count echoed in the bosom of the young wife, then pregnant; one of those presentiments which furrow a track like lightning through the soul, told her that her child would be born at seven months. An inward heat overflowed her from head to foot, sending the life's blood to her heart with such violence that

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the surface of her body felt bathed in ice. From that hour not a day had passed that the sense of secret terror did not check every impulse of her innocent gayety. The memory of the look, of the inflections of voice with which the count accompanied his words, still froze her blood, and silenced her sufferings, as she leaned over that sleeping head, and strove to see some sign of a pity she had vainly sought there when awake.

The child, threatened with death before its life began, made so vigorous a movement that she cried aloud, in a voice that seemed like a sigh, "Poor babe!"

She said no more; there are ideas that a mother cannot bear. Incapable of reasoning at this moment, the countess was almost choked with the intensity of a suffering as yet unknown to her. Two tears, escaping from her eyes, rolled slowly down her cheeks, and traced two shining lines, remaining suspended at the bottom of that white face, like dewdrops on a lily. What learned man would take upon himself to say that the child unborn is on some neutral ground, where the emotions of its mother do not penetrate during those hours when soul clasps body and communicates its impressions, when thought permeates blood with healing balm or poisonous fluids? The terror that shakes the tree will it not hurt the fruit? Those words, "Poor babe!" were they dictated by a vision of the future? The shuddering of this mother was violent; her look piercing.

The bloody answer given by the count at the banquet was a link mysteriously connecting the past with this premature confinement. That odious suspicion, thus publicly expressed, had cast into the memories of the

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countess a dread which echoed to the future. Since that fatal gala, she had driven from her mind, with as much fear as another woman would have found pleasure in evoking them, a thousand scattered scenes of her past existence. She refused even to think of the happy days when her heart was free to love. Like as the melodies of their native land make exiles weep, so these memories revived sensations so delightful that her young conscience thought them crimes, and used them to enforce still further the savage threat of the count. There lay the secret of the horror which was now oppressing her soul.

Sleeping figures possess a sort of suavity, due to the absolute repose of both body and mind; but though that species of calmness softened but slightly the harsh expression of the count's features, all illusion granted to the unhappy is so persuasive that the poor wife ended by finding hope in that tranquillity. The roar of the tempest, now descending in torrents of rain, seemed to her no more than a melancholy moan; her fears and her pains both yielded her a momentary respite. Contemplating the man to whom her life was bound, the countess allowed herself to float into a revery, the sweetness of which was so intoxicating that she had no strength to break its charm. For a moment, by one of those visions which in some way share the divine power, there passed before her rapid images of a happiness lost beyond recall.

Jeanne in her vision saw faintly, and as if in a distant gleam of dawn, the modest castle where her careless childhood had glided on; there were the verdant lawns, the rippling brook, the little chamber, the scenes

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of her happy play. She saw herself gathering flowers and planting them, unknowing why they wilted and would not grow, despite her constancy in watering them. Next, she saw confusedly the vast town and the vast house blackened by age, to which her mother took her when she was seven years old. Her lively memory showed her the old gray heads of the masters who taught and tormented her. She remembered the person of her father; she saw him getting off his mule at the door of the manor-house, and taking her by the hand to lead her up the stairs; she recalled how her prattle drove from his brow the judicial cares he did not always lay aside with his black or his red robes, the white fur of which fell one day by chance under the snipping of her mischievous scissors. She cast but one glance at the confessor of her aunt, the mother-superior of a convent of Poor Clares, a rigid and fanatical old man, whose duty it was to initiate her into the mysteries of religion. Hardened by the severities necessary against heretics, the old priest never ceased to jangle the chains of hell; he told her of nothing but the vengeance of Heaven, and made her tremble with the assurance that God's eye was on her. Rendered timid, she dared not raise her eyes in the priest's presence, and ceased to have any feeling but respect for her mother, whom up to that time she had made a sharer in all her frolics. When she saw that beloved mother turning her blue eyes towards her with an appearance of anger, a religious terror took possession of the girl's heart.

Then suddenly the vision took her to the second period of her childhood, when as yet she understood

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nothing of the things of life. She thought with an almost mocking regret of the days when all her happiness was to work beside her mother in the tapestried salon, to pray in the church, to sing her ballads to a lute, to read in secret a romance of chivalry, to pluck the petals of a flower, discover what gift her father would make her on the feast of the Blessed Saint-John, and find out the meaning of speeches repressed before her. Passing thus from her childish joys through the sixteen years of her girlhood, the grace of those softly flowing years when she knew no pain was eclipsed by the brightness of a memory precious though ill-fated. The joyous peace of her childhood was far less sweet to her than a single one of the troubles scattered upon the last two years of her childhood, — years that were rich in treasures now buried forever in her heart.

The vision brought her suddenly to that morning, that ravishing morning, when in the grand old parlor panelled and carved in oak, which served the family as a dining-room, she saw her handsome cousin for the first time. Alarmed by the seditions in Paris, her mother's family had sent the young courtier to Rouen, hoping that he could there be trained to the duties of the magistracy by his uncle, whose office might some day devolve upon him. The countess smiled involuntarily as she remembered the haste with which she retired on seeing this relation whom she did not know. But, in spite of the rapidity with which she opened and shut the door, a single glance had put into her soul so vigorous an impression of the scene that even at this moment she seemed to see it still occurring. Her eye again wandered from the violet velvet mantle embroid-

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ered with gold and lined with satin to the spurs on the boots, the pretty lozenges slashed into the doublet, the trunk-hose, and the rich collaret which gave to view a throat as white as the lace around it. She stroked with her hand the handsome face with its tiny pointed moustache, and "royale" as small as the ermine tips upon her father's hood.

In the silence of the night, with her eyes fixed on the green silk curtains which she no longer saw, the countess, forgetting the storm, her husband, and her fears, recalled the days which seemed to her longer than years, so full were they, — days when she loved, and was beloved! — and the moment when, fearing her mother's sternness, she had slipped one morning into her father's study to whisper her girlish confidences on his knee, waiting for his smile at her caresses to say in his ear, "Will you scold me if I tell you something?" Once more she heard her father say, after a few questions in reply to which she spoke for the first time of her love, "Well, well, my child, we will think of it. If he studies well, if he fits himself to succeed me, if he continues to please you, I will be on your side."

After that she had listened no longer; she had kissed her father, and, knocking over his papers as she ran from the room, she flew to the great linden-tree where, daily, before her formidable mother rose, she met that charming cousin, Georges de Chaverny.

Faithfully the youth promised to study law and customs. He laid aside the splendid trappings of the nobility of the sword to wear the sterner costume of the magistracy.

"I like you better in black," she said.

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It was a falsehood, but by that falsehood she comforted her lover for having thrown his dagger to the winds. The memory of the little schemes employed to deceive her mother, whose severity seemed great, brought back to her the soulful joys of that innocent and mutual and sanctioned love; sometimes a rendezvous beneath the linden, where speech could be freer than before witnesses; sometimes a furtive clasp, or a stolen kiss, — in short, all the naïve instalments of a passion that did not pass the bounds of modesty. Reliving in her vision those delightful days when she seemed to have too much happiness, she fancied that she kissed, in the void, that fine young face with the glowing eyes, that rosy mouth that spoke so well of love. Yes, she had loved Chaverny, poor apparently; but what treasures had she not discovered in that soul as tender as it was strong!

Suddenly her father died. Chaverny did not succeed him. The flames of civil war burst forth. By Chaverny's care she and her mother found refuge in a little town of Lower Normandy. Soon the deaths of other relatives made her one of the richest heiresses in France. Happiness disappeared as wealth came to her. The savage and terrible face of Comte d'Hérouville, who asked her hand, rose before her like a thundercloud, spreading its gloom over the smiling meadows so lately gilded by the sun. The poor countess strove to cast from her memory the scenes of weeping and despair brought about by her long resistance.

At last came an awful night when her mother, pale and dying, threw herself at her daughter's feet. Jeanne could save Chaverny's life by yielding; she

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yielded. It was night. The count, arriving bloody from the battlefield was there; all was ready, the priest, the altar, the torches! Jeanne belonged henceforth to misery. Scarcely had she time to say to her young cousin who was set at liberty: —

"Georges, if you love me, never see me again!"

She heard the departing steps of her lover, whom, in truth, she never saw again; but in the depths of her heart she still kept sacred his last look which returned perpetually in her dreams and illumined them. Living like a cat shut into a lion's cage, the young wife dreaded at all hours the claws of the master which ever threatened her. She knew that in order to be happy she must forget the past and think only of the future; but there were days, consecrated to the memory of some vanished joy, when she deliberately made it a crime to put on the gown she had worn on the day she had seen her lover for the first time.

"I am not guilty," she said, "but if I seem guilty to the count it is as if I were so. Perhaps I am! The Holy Virgin conceived without —"

She stopped. During this moment when her thoughts were misty and her soul floated in a region of fantasy her naïveté made her attribute to that last look with which her lover transfixed her the occult power of the visitation of the angel to the Mother of her Lord. This supposition, worthy of the days of innocence to which her revery had carried her back, vanished before the memory of a conjugal scene more odious than death. The poor countess could have no real doubt as to the legitimacy of the child that stirred in her womb. The night of her marriage reappeared

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to her in all the horror of its agony, bringing in its train other such nights and sadder days.

"Ah! my poor Chaverny!" she cried, weeping, "you so respectful, so gracious, *you* were always kind to me."

She turned her eyes to her husband as if to persuade herself that that harsh face contained a promise of mercy, dearly bought. The count was awake. His yellow eyes, clear as those of a tiger, glittered beneath their tufted eyebrows and never had his glance been so incisive. The countess, terrified at having encountered it, slid back under the great counterpane and was motionless.

"Why are you weeping?" said the count, pulling away the covering which hid his wife.

That voice, always a terror to her, had a specious softness at this moment which seemed to her of good augury.

"I suffer much," she answered.

"Well, my pretty one, it is no crime to suffer; why did you tremble when I looked at you? Alas! what must I do to be loved?" The wrinkles of his forehead between the eyebrows deepened. "I see plainly you are afraid of me," he added, sighing.

Prompted by the instinct of feeble natures the countess interrupted the count by moans, exclaiming: —

"I fear a miscarriage! I clambered over the rocks last evening and tired myself."

Hearing those words, the count cast so horribly suspicious a look upon his wife, that she reddened and shuddered. He mistook the fear of the innocent creature for remorse.

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"Perhaps it is the beginning of a regular childbirth," he said.

"What then?" she said.

"In any case, I must have a proper man here," he said. "I will fetch one."

The gloomy look which accompanied these words overcame the countess, who fell back in the bed with a moan, caused more by a sense of her fate than by the agony of the coming crisis; that moan convinced the count of the justice of the suspicions that were rising in his mind. Affecting a calmness which the tones of his voice, his gestures, and looks contradicted, he rose hastily, wrapped himself in a dressing-gown which lay on a chair, and began by locking a door near the chimney through which the state bedroom was entered from the reception rooms which communicated with the great staircase.

Seeing her husband pocket that key, the countess had a presentiment of danger. She next heard him open the door opposite to that which he had just locked and enter a room where the counts of Hérouville slept when they did not honor their wives with their noble company. The countess knew of that room only by hearsay. Jealousy kept her husband always with her. If occasionally some military expedition forced him to leave her, the count left more than one Argus, whose incessant spying proved his shameful distrust.

In spite of the attention the countess now gave to the slightest noise, she heard nothing more. The count had, in fact, entered a long gallery leading from his room which continued down the western wing of the castle. Cardinal d'Hérouville, his great-uncle, a

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passionate lover of the works of printing, had there collected a library as interesting for the number as for the beauty of its volumes, and prudence had caused him to build into the walls one of those curious inventions suggested by solitude or by monastic fears. A silver chain set in motion, by means of invisible wires, a bell placed at the bed's head of a faithful servitor. The count now pulled the chain, and the boots and spurs of the man on duty sounded on the stone steps of a spiral staircase, placed in the tall tower which flanked the western corner of the château on the ocean side.

When the count heard the steps of his retainer he pulled back the rusty bolts which protected the door leading from the gallery to the tower, admitting into the sanctuary of learning a man of arms whose stalwart appearance was in keeping with that of his master. This man, scarcely awakened, seemed to have walked there by instinct; the horn lantern which he held in his hand threw so feeble a gleam down the long library that his master and he appeared in that visible darkness like two phantoms.

"Saddle my war-horse instantly, and come with me yourself."

This order was given in a deep tone which roused the man's intelligence. He raised his eyes to those of his master and encountered so piercing a look that the effect was that of an electric shock.

"Bertrand," added the count laying his right hand on the servant's arm, "take off your cuirass, and wear the uniform of a captain of guerillas."

"Heavens and earth, monseigneur! What? disguise

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myself as a Leaguer! Excuse me, I will obey you; but I would rather be hanged."

The count smiled; then to efface that smile, which contrasted with the expression of his face, he answered roughly: —

"Choose the strongest horse there is in the stable and follow me. We shall ride like balls shot from an arquebuse. Be ready when I am ready. I will ring to let you know."

Bertrand bowed in silence and went away; but when he had gone a few steps he said to himself, as he listened to the howling of the storm: —

"All the devils are abroad, *jarnidieu!* I'd have been surprised to see this one stay quietly in his bed. We took Saint-Lô in just such a tempest as this."

The count kept in his room a disguise which often served him in his campaign stratagems. Putting on the shabby buff-coat that looked as though it might belong to one of the poor horse-soldiers whose pittance was so seldom paid by Henri IV., he returned to the room where his wife was moaning.

"Try to suffer patiently," he said to her. "I will founder my horse if necessary to bring you speedy relief."

These words were certainly not alarming, and the countess, emboldened by them, was about to make a request when the count asked her suddenly: —

"Tell me where you keep your masks?"

"My masks!" she replied. "Good God! what do you want to do with them?"

"Where are they?" he repeated, with his usual violence.

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"In the chest," she said.

She shuddered when she saw her husband select from among her masks a *touret de nez*, the wearing of which was as common among the ladies of that time as the wearing of gloves in our day. The count became entirely unrecognizable after he had put an old gray felt hat with a broken cock's-feather on his head. He girded round his loins a broad leathern belt, in which he stuck a dagger, which he did not wear habitually. These miserable garments gave him so terrifying an air and he approached the bed with so strange a motion that the countess thought her last hour had come.

"Ah! don't kill us!" she cried, "leave me my child, and I will love you well."

"You must feel yourself very guilty to offer as the ransom of your faults the love you owe me."

The count's voice was lugubrious and the bitter words were enforced by a look which fell like lead upon the countess.

"My God!" she cried sorrowfully, "can innocence be fatal?"

"Your death is not in question," said her master, coming out of a sort of revery into which he had fallen. "You are to do exactly, and for love of me, what I shall now tell you."

He flung upon the bed one of the two masks he had taken from the chest, and smiled with derision as he saw the gesture of involuntary fear which the slight shock of the black velvet wrung from his wife.

"You will give me a puny child!" he cried. "Wear that mask on your face when I return. "I'll have no barber-surgeon boast that he has seen the Comtesse d'Hérouville."

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"A man! — why choose a man for the purpose?" she said in a feeble voice.

"Ho! ho! my lady, am I not master here?" replied the count.

"What matters one horror the more!" murmured the countess; but her master had disappeared, and the exclamation did her no injury.

Presently, in a brief lull of the storm, the countess heard the gallop of two horses which seemed to fly across the sandy dunes by which the castle was surrounded. The sound was quickly lost in that of the waves. Soon she felt herself a prisoner in the vast apartment, alone in the midst of a night both silent and threatening, and without succor against an evil she saw approaching her with rapid strides. In vain she sought for some stratagem by which to save that child conceived in tears, already her consolation, the spring of all her thoughts, the future of her affections, her one frail hope.

Sustained by maternal courage, she took the horn with which her husband summoned his men, and, opening a window, blew through the brass tube feeble notes that died away upon the vast expanse of water, like a bubble blown into the air by a child. She felt the uselessness of that moan unheard of men, and turned to hasten through the apartments, hoping that all the issues were not closed upon her. Reaching the library she sought in vain for some secret passage; then, passing between the long rows of books, she reached a window which looked upon the courtyard. Again she sounded the horn, but without success against the voice of the hurricane.

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In her helplessness she thought of trusting herself to one of the women, — all creatures of her husband, — when, passing into her oratory, she found that the count had locked the only door that led to their apartments. This was a horrible discovery. Such precautions taken to isolate her showed a desire to proceed without witnesses to some terrible execution. As moment after moment she lost hope, the pangs of childbirth grew stronger and keener. A presentiment of murder, joined to the fatigue of her efforts, overcame her last remaining strength. She was like a shipwrecked man who sinks, borne under by one last wave less furious than others he has vanquished. The bewildering pangs of her condition kept her from knowing the lapse of time. At the moment when she felt that, alone, without help, she was about to give birth to her child, and to all her other terrors was added that of the accidents to which her ignorance exposed her, the count appeared, without a sound that let her know of his arrival. The man was there, like a demon claiming at the close of a compact the soul that was sold to him. He muttered angrily at finding his wife's face uncovered; then after masking her carefully, he took her in his arms and laid her on the bed in her chamber.

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II.

THE BONESETTER.

THE terror of that apparition and hasty removal stopped for a moment the physical sufferings of the countess, and so enabled her to cast a furtive glance at the actors in this mysterious scene. She did not recognize Bertrand, who was there disguised and masked as carefully as his master. After lighting in haste some candles, the light of which mingled with the first rays of the sun which were reddening the window panes, the old servitor had gone to the embrasure of a window and stood leaning against a corner of it. There, with his face toward the wall, he seemed to be estimating its thickness, keeping his body in such absolute immobility that he might have been taken for a statue. In the middle of the room the countess beheld a short, stout man, apparently out of breath and stupefied, whose eyes were blindfolded and his features so distorted with terror that it was impossible to guess at their natural expression.

"God's death! you scamp," said the count, giving him back his eyesight by a rough movement which threw upon the man's neck the bandage that had been upon his eyes. "I warn you not to look at anything but the wretched woman on whom you are now to exercise your skill; if you do, I'll fling you into the

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river that flows beneath those windows, with a collar round your neck weighing a hundred pounds!"

With that, he pulled down upon the breast of his stupefied hearer the cravat with which his eyes had been bandaged.

"Examine first if this can be a miscarriage," he continued; "in which case your life will answer to me for the mother's; but, if the child is living, you are to bring it to me."

So saying, the count seized the poor operator by the body and placed him before the countess, then he went himself to the depths of a bay-window and began to drum with his fingers upon the panes, casting glances alternately on his serving-man, on the bed, and at the ocean, as if he were pledging to the expected child a cradle in the waves.

The man whom, with outrageous violence, the count and Bertrand had snatched from his bed and fastened to the crupper of the latter's horse, was a personage whose individuality may serve to characterize the period, — a man, moreover, whose influence was destined to make itself felt in the house of Hérouville.

Never in any age were the nobles so little informed as to natural science, and never was judicial astrology held in greater honor; for at no period in history was there a greater general desire to know the future. This ignorance and this curiosity had led to the utmost confusion in human knowledge; all things were still mere personal experience; the nomenclatures of theory did not exist; printing was done at enormous cost; scientific communication had little or no facility; the Church persecuted science and all research which

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was based on the analysis of natural phenomena. Persecution begat mystery. So, to the people as well as to the nobles, physician and alchemist, mathematician and astronomer, astrologer and necromancer were six attributes, all meeting in the single person of the physician. In those days a superior physician was supposed to be cultivating magic; while curing his patient he was drawing their horoscopes. Princes protected the men of genius who were willing to reveal the future; they lodged them in their palaces and pensioned them. The famous Cornelius Agrippa, who came to France to become the physician of Henri II., would not consent, as Nostradamus did, to predict the future, and for this reason he was dismissed by Catherine de' Medici, who replaced him with Cosmo Ruggiero. The men of science, who were superior to their times, were therefore seldom appreciated; they simply inspired an ignorant fear of occult sciences and their results.

Without being precisely one of the famous mathematicians, the man whom the count had brought enjoyed in Normandy the equivocal reputation which attached to a physician who was known to do mysterious works. He belonged to the class of sorcerers who are still called in certain parts of France *bonesetters*. This name belonged to certain untutored geniuses who, without apparent study, but by means of hereditary knowledge and the effect of long practice, the observations of which accumulated in the family, were *bonesetters;* that is, they mended broken limbs and cured both men and beasts of certain maladies, possessing secrets said to be marvellous for the treatment

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of serious cases. But not only had Maître Antoine Beauvouloir (the name of the present bonesetter) a father and grandfather who were famous practitioners, from whom he inherited important traditions, he was also learned in medicine, and was given to the study of natural science. The country people saw his study full of books and other strange things which gave to his successes a coloring of magic. Without passing strictly for a sorcerer, Antoine Beauvouloir impressed the populace through a circumference of a hundred miles with respect akin to terror, and (what was far more really dangerous for himself) he held in his power many secrets of life and death which concerned the noble families of that region. Like his father and grandfather before him, he was celebrated for his skill in confinements and miscarriages. In those days of unbridled disorder, crimes were so frequent and passions so violent that the higher nobility often found itself compelled to initiate Maître Antoine Beauvouloir into secrets both shameful and terrible. His discretion, so essential to his safety, was absolute; consequently his clients paid him well, and his hereditary practice greatly increased. Always on the road, sometimes roused in the dead of night, as on this occasion by the count, sometimes obliged to spend several days with certain great ladies, he had never married; in fact, his reputation had hindered certain young women from accepting him. Incapable of finding consolation in the practice of his profession, which gave him such power over feminine weakness, the poor bonesetter felt himself born for the joys of family and yet was unable to obtain them.

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The good man's excellent heart was concealed by a misleading appearance of joviality in keeping with his puffy cheeks and rotund figure, the vivacity of his fat little body, and the frankness of his speech. He was anxious to marry that he might have a daughter who should transfer his property to some poor noble; he did not like his station as bonesetter and wished to rescue his family name from the position in which the prejudices of the times had placed it. He himself took willingly enough to the feasts and jovialities which usually followed his principal operations. The habit of being on such occasions the most important personage in the company, had added to his natural gayety a sufficient dose of serious vanity. His impertinences were usually well received in crucial moments when it often pleased him to perform his operations with a certain slow majesty. He was, in other respects, as inquisitive as a nightingale, as greedy as a hound, and as garrulous as all diplomatists who talk incessantly and betray no secrets. In spite of these defects developed in him by the endless adventures into which his profession led him, Antoine Beauvouloir was held to be the least bad man in Normandy. Though he belonged to the small number of minds who are superior to their epoch, the strong good sense of a Norman countryman warned him to conceal the ideas he acquired and the truths he from time to time discovered.

As soon as he found himself placed by the count in presence of a woman in childbirth, the bonesetter recovered his presence of mind. He felt the pulse of the masked lady; not that he gave it a single thought,

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but under cover of that medical action he could reflect, and he did reflect on his own situation. In none of the shameful and criminal intrigues in which superior force had compelled him to act as a blind instrument, had precautions been taken with such mystery as in this case. Though his death had often been threatened as a means of assuring the secrecy of enterprises in which he had taken part against his will, his life had never been so endangered as at that moment. He resolved, before all things, to find out who it was who now employed him, and to discover the actual extent of his danger, in order to save, if possible, his own little person.

"What is the trouble?" he said to the countess in a low voice, as he placed her in a manner to receive his help.

"Do not give him the child —"

"Speak loud!" cried the count in thundering tones which prevented Beauvouloir from hearing the last word uttered by the countess. "If not," added the count who was careful to disguise his voice, "say your *In manus.*"

"Complain aloud," said the leech to the lady; "cry! scream! *Jarnidieu!* that man has a necklace that won't fit you any better than me. Courage, my little lady!"

"Touch her lightly!" cried the count.

"Monsieur is jealous," said the operator in a shrill voice, fortunately drowned by the countess's cries.

For Maître Beauvouloir's safety Nature was merciful. It was more a miscarriage than a regular birth, and the child was so puny that it caused little suffering to the mother.

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"Holy Virgin!" cried the bonesetter, "it is n't a miscarriage, after all!"

The count made the floor shake as he stamped with rage. The countess pinched Beauvouloir.

"Ah! I see!" he said to himself. "It ought to be a premature birth, ought it?" he whispered to the countess, who replied with an affirmative sign, as if that gesture were the only language in which to express her thoughts.

"It is not all clear to me yet," thought the bonesetter.

Like all men in constant practice, he recognized at once a woman in her first trouble as he called it. Though the modest inexperience of certain gestures showed him the virgin ignorance of the countess, the mischievous operator exclaimed: —

"Madame is delivered as if she knew all about it!"

The count then said, with a calmness more terrifying than his anger: —

"Give me the child."

"Don't give it him, for the love of God!" cried the mother, whose almost savage cry awoke in the heart of the little man a courageous pity which attached him, more than he knew himself, to the helpless infant rejected by his father.

"The child is not yet born; you are counting your chicken before it is hatched," he said, coldly, hiding the infant.

Surprised to hear no cries, he examined the child, thinking it dead. The count, seeing the deception, sprang upon him with one bound.

"God of heaven! will you give it to me?" he cried, snatching the hapless victim which uttered feeble cries.

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"Take care; the child is deformed and almost lifeless; it is a seven months' child," said Beauvouloir clinging to the count's arm. Then, with a strength given to him by the excitement of his pity, he clung to the father's fingers, whispering in a broken voice: "Spare yourself a crime, the child cannot live."

"Wretch!" replied the count, from whose hands the bonesetter had wrenched the child, "who told you that I wished to kill my son? Could I not caress it?"

"Wait till he is eighteen years old to caress him in that way," replied Beauvouloir, recovering the sense of his importance. "But," he added, thinking of his own safety, for he had recognized the Comte d' Hérouville, who in his rage had forgotten to disguise his voice, "have him baptized at once and do not speak of his danger to the mother, or you will kill her."

The gesture of satisfaction which escaped the count when the child's death was prophesied, suggested this speech to the bonesetter as the best means of saving the child at the moment. Beauvouloir now hastened to carry the infant back to its mother who had fainted, and he pointed to her condition reprovingly, to warn the count of the results of his violence. The countess had heard all; for in many of the great crises of life the human organs acquire an otherwise unknown delicacy. But the cries of the child, laid beside her on the bed, restored her to life as if by magic; she fancied she heard the voices of angels, when, under cover of the whimperings of the babe, the bonesetter said in her ear: —

"Take care of him, and he 'll live a hundred years. Beauvouloir knows what he is talking about."

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A celestial sigh, a silent pressure of the hand were the reward of the leech, who had looked to see, before yeilding the frail little creature to its mother's embrace, whether that of the father had done no harm to its puny organization. The half-crazed motion with which the mother hid her son beside her and the threatening glance she cast upon the count through the eye-holes of her mask, made Beauvouloir shudder.

"She will die if she loses that child too soon," he said to the count.

During the latter part of this scene the lord of Hérouville seemed to hear and see nothing. Rigid, and as if absorbed in meditation, he stood by the window drumming on its panes. But he turned at the last words uttered by the bonesetter, with an almost frenzied motion, and came to him with uplifted dagger.

"Miserable clown!" he cried, giving him the opprobrious name by which the Royalists insulted the Leaguers. "Impudent scoundrel! your science which makes you the accomplice of men who steal inheritances is all that prevents me from depriving Normandy of her sorcerer."

So saying, and to Beauvouloir's great satisfaction, the count replaced the dagger in its sheath.

"Could you not," continued the count, "find yourself for once in your life in the honorable company of a noble and his wife, without suspecting them of the base crimes and trickery of your own kind? Kill my son! take him from his mother! Where did you get such crazy ideas? Am I a madman? Why do you attempt to frighten me about the life of that vigorous

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child? Fool! I defy your silly talk — but remember this, since you are here, your miserable life shall answer for that of the mother and the child."

The bonesetter was puzzled by this sudden change in the count's intentions. This show of tenderness for the infant alarmed him far more than the impatient cruelty and savage indifference hitherto manifested by the count, whose tone in pronouncing the last words seemed to Beauvouloir to point to some better scheme for reaching his infernal ends. The shrewd practitioner turned this idea over in his mind until a light struck him.

"I have it!" he said to himself. "This great and good noble does not want to make himself odious to his wife; he 'll trust to the vials of the apothecary. I must warn the lady to see to the food and medicine of her babe."

As he turned toward the bed, the count who had opened a closet, stopped him with an imperious gesture, holding out a purse. Beauvouloir saw within its red silk meshes a quantity of gold, which the count now flung to him contemptuously.

"Though you make me out a villain I am not released from the obligation of paying you like a lord. I shall not ask you to be discreet. This man here," (pointing to Bertrand) "will explain to you that there are rivers and trees everywhere for miserable wretches who chatter of me."

So saying the count advanced slowly to the bonesetter, pushed a chair noisily toward him, as if to invite him to sit down, as he did himself by the bedside; then he said to his wife in a specious voice: —

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"Well, my pretty one, so we have a son; this is a joyful thing for us. Do you suffer much?"

"No," murmured the countess.

The evident surprise of the mother, and the tardy demonstrations of pleasure on the part of the father, convinced Beauvouloir that there was some incident behind all this which escaped his penetration. He persisted in his suspicions, and rested his hand on that of the young wife, less to watch her condition than to convey to her some advice.

"The skin is good, I fear nothing for madame. The milk fever will come, of course; but you need not be alarmed; that is nothing."

At this point the wily bonesetter paused, and pressed the hand of the countess to make her attentive to his words.

"If you wish to avoid all anxiety about your son, madame," he continued, "never leave him; suckle him yourself, and beware of the drugs of apothecaries. The mother's breast is the remedy for all the ills of infancy. I have seen many births of seven months' children, but I never saw any so little painful as this. But that is not surprising; the child is so small. You could put him in a wooden shoe! I am certain he does n't weigh more than sixteen ounces. Milk, milk, milk. Keep him always on your breast and you will save him."

These last words were accompanied by a significant pressure of the fingers. Disregarding the yellow flames flashing from the eyeholes of the count's mask, Beauvouloir uttered these words with the serious imperturbability of a man who intends to earn his money.

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"Ho! ho! bonesetter, you are leaving your old felt hat behind you," said Bertrand, as the two left the bedroom together.

The reasons of the sudden mercy which the count had shown to his son were to be found in a notary's office. At the moment when Beauvouloir arrested his murderous hand avarice and the Legal Custom of Normandy rose up before him. Those mighty powers stiffened his fingers and silenced the passion of his hatred. One cried out to him, "The property of your wife cannot belong to the house of Hérouville except through a male child." The other pointed to a dying countess and her fortune claimed by the collateral heirs of the Saint-Savins. Both advised him to leave to nature the extinction of that hated child, and to wait the birth of a second son who might be healthy and vigorous before getting rid of his wife and first-born. He saw neither wife nor child; he saw the estates only, and hatred was softened by ambition. The mother, who knew his nature, was even more surprised than the bonesetter, and she still retained her instinctive fears, showing them at times openly, for the courage of mothers seemed suddenly to have doubled her strength.

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III.

THE MOTHER'S LOVE.

For several days the count remained assiduously beside his wife, showing her attentions to which self-interest imparted a sort of tenderness. The countess saw, however, that she alone was the object of these attentions. The hatred of the father for his son showed itself in every detail; he abstained from looking at him or touching him; he would rise abruptly and leave the room if the child cried; in short, he seemed to endure it living only through the hope of seeing it die. But even this self-restraint was galling to the count. The day on which he saw that the mother's intelligent eye perceived, without fully comprehending, the danger that threatened her son, he announced his departure on the morning after the mass for her churching was solemnized, under pretext of rallying his forces to the support of the king.

Such were the circumstances which preceded and accompanied the birth of Étienne d'Hérouville. If the count had no other reason for wishing the death of this disowned son poor Étienne would still have been the object of his aversion. In his eyes the misfortune of a rickety, sickly constitution was a flagrant offence to his self-love as a father. If he execrated handsome men, he also detested weakly ones, in whom mental capacity took the place of physical strength. To

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please him a man should be ugly in face, tall, robust, and ignorant. Étienne, whose debility would bow him, as it were, to the sedentary occupations of knowledge, was certain to find in his father a natural enemy. His struggle with that colossus began therefore from his cradle, and his sole support against that cruel antagonist was the heart of his mother whose love increased, by a tender law of nature, as perils threatened him.

Buried in solitude after the abrupt departure of the count, Jeanne de Saint-Savin owed to her child the only semblance of happiness that consoled her life. She loved him as women love the child of an illicit love; obliged to suckle him, the duty never wearied her. She would not let her women care for the child. She dressed and undressed him, finding fresh pleasures in every little care that he required. Happiness glowed upon her face as she obeyed the needs of the little being. As Étienne had come into the world prematurely, no clothes were ready for him, and those that were needed she made herself, — with what perfection, you know, ye mothers, who have worked in silence for a treasured child. The days had never hours enough for these manifold occupations and the minute precautions of the nursing mother; those days fled by, laden with her secret content.

The counsel of the bonesetter still continued in the countess's mind. She feared for her child, and would gladly not have slept in order to be sure that no one approached him during her sleep; and she kept his cradle beside her bed. In the absence of the count she ventured to send for the bonesetter, whose name she had caught and remembered. To her, Beauvouloir

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was a being to whom she owed an untold debt of gratitude; and she desired of all things to question him on certain points relating to her son. If an attempt were made to poison him, how should she foil it? In what way ought she to manage his frail constitution? Was it well to nurse him long? If she died, would Beauvouloir undertake the care of the poor child's health?

To the questions of the countess, Beauvouloir, deeply touched, replied that he feared, as much as she did, an attempt to poison Étienne; but there was, he assured her, no danger so long as she nursed the child; and in future, when obliged to feed him, she must taste the food herself.

"If Madame la comtesse," he said, "feels anything strange upon her tongue, a prickly, bitter, strong salt taste, reject the food. Let the child's clothes be washed under her own eye and let her keep the key of the chest which contains them. Should anything happen to the child send instantly to me."

These instructions sank deep into Jeanne's heart. She begged Beauvouloir to regard her always as one who would do him any service in her power. On that the poor man told her that she held his happiness in her hands.

Then he related briefly how the Comte d' Hérouville had in his youth loved a courtesan, known by the name of La Belle Romaine, who had formerly belonged to the Cardinal of Lorraine. Abandoned by the count before very long, she had died miserably, leaving a child named Gertrude, who had been rescued by the Sisters of the Convent of Poor Clares, the Mother Superior of which was Mademoiselle de Saint-Savin,

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the countess's aunt. Having been called to treat Gertrude for an illness, he, Beauvouloir, had fallen in love with her, and if Madame la comtesse, he said, would undertake the affair, she would not only more than repay him for what she thought he had done for her, but she would make him grateful to her for life. The count might, sooner or later, be brought to take an interest in so beautiful a daughter, and might protect her indirectly by making him his physician.

The countess, compassionate to all true love, promised to do her best, and pursued the affair so warmly that at the birth of her second son she did obtain from her husband a *dot* for the young girl, who was married soon after to Beauvouloir. The *dot* and his savings enabled the bonesetter to buy a charming estate called Forcalier near the castle of Hérouville, and to give his life the dignity of a student and man of learning.

Comforted by the kind physician, the countess felt that to her were given joys unknown to other mothers. Mother and child, two feeble beings, seemed united in one thought, they understood each other long before language could interpret between them. From the moment when Étienne first turned his eyes on things about him with the stupid eagerness of a little child, his glance had rested on the sombre hangings of the castle walls. When his young ear strove to listen and to distinguish sounds, he heard the monotonous ebb and flow of the sea upon the rocks, as regular as the swinging of a pendulum. Thus places, sounds, and things, all that strikes the senses and forms the character, inclined him to melancholy. His mother, too, was doomed to live and die in the clouds of mel-

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ancholy; and to him, from his birth up, she was the only being that existed on the earth and filled for him the desert. Like all frail children, Étienne's attitude was passive, and in that he resembled his mother. The delicacy of his organs was such that a sudden noise, or the presence of a boisterous person gave him a sort of fever. He was like those little insects for whom God seems to temper the violence of the wind and the heat of the sun; incapable, like them, of struggling against the slightest obstacle, he yielded, as they do, without resistance or complaint, to everything that seemed to him aggressive. This angelic patience inspired in the mother a sentiment which took away all fatigue from the incessant care required by so frail a being.

Soon his precocious perception of suffering revealed to him the power that he had upon his mother; often he tried to divert her with caresses and make her smile at his play; and never did his coaxing hands, his stammered words, his intelligent laugh fail to rouse her from her revery. If he was tired, his care for her kept him from complaining.

"Poor, dear, little sensitive!" cried the countess as he fell asleep tired with some play which had driven the sad memories from her mind, "how can you live in this world? who will understand you? who will love you? who will see the treasures hidden in that frail body? No one! Like me, you are alone on earth."

She sighed and wept. The graceful pose of her child lying on her knees made her smile sadly. She looked at him long, tasting one of those pleasures which are a secret between mothers and God. Étienne's weakness was so great that until he was a year and a

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half old she had never dared to take him out of doors; but now the faint color which tinted the whiteness of his skin like the petals of a wild rose, showed that life and health were already there.

One morning the countess, giving herself up to the glad joy of all mothers when their first child walks for the first time, was playing with Étienne on the floor when suddenly she heard the heavy step of a man upon the boards. Hardly had she risen with a movement of involuntary surprise, when the count stood before her. She gave a cry, but endeavored instantly to undo that involuntary wrong by going up to him and offering her forehead for a kiss.

"Why not have sent me notice of your return?" she said.

"My reception would have been more cordial, but less frank," he answered bitterly.

Suddenly he saw the child. The evident health in which he found it wrung from him a gesture of surprise mingled with fury. But he repressed his anger, and began to smile.

"I bring good news," he said. "I have received the governorship of Champagne and the king's promise to be made duke and peer. Moreover, we have inherited a princely fortune from your cousin; that cursèd Huguenot, Georges de Chaverny is killed."

The countess turned pale and dropped into a chair. She saw the secret of the devilish smile on her husband's face.

"Monsieur," she said in a voice of emotion, "you know well that I loved my cousin Chaverny. You will answer to God for the pain you inflict upon me."

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At these words the eye of the count glittered; his lips trembled, but he could not utter a word, so furious was he; he flung his dagger on the table with such violence that the metal resounded like a thunder-clap.

"Listen to me," he said in his strongest voice, "and remember my words. I will never see or hear the little monster you hold in your arms. He is your child, and not mine; there is nothing of me in him. Hide him, I say, hide him from my sight, or — "

"Just God!" cried the countess, "protect us!"

"Silence!" said her husband. "If you do not wish me to throttle him, see that I never find him in my way."

"Then," said the countess gathering strength to oppose her tyrant, "swear to me that if you never meet him you will do nothing to injure him. Can I trust your word as a nobleman for that?"

"What does all this mean?" said the count.

"If you will not swear, kill us now together!" cried the countess, falling on her knees and pressing her child to her breast.

"Rise, madame. I give you my word as a man of honor to do nothing against the life of that cursèd child, provided he lives among the rocks between the sea and the house, and never crosses my path. I will give him that fisherman's house down there for his dwelling, and the beach for a domain. But woe betide him if I ever find him beyond those limits."

The countess began to weep.

"Look at him!" she said. "He is your son."

"Madame!"

At that word, the frightened mother carried away

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the child whose heart was beating like that of a bird caught in its nest. Whether innocence has a power which the hardest men cannot escape, or whether the count regretted his violence and feared to plunge into despair a creature so necessary to his pleasures and also to his worldly prosperity, it is certain that his voice was as soft as it was possible to make it when his wife returned.

"Jeanne, my dear," he said, "do not be angry with me; give me your hand. One never knows how to treat you women. I return, bringing you fresh honors and more wealth, and yet, *tête-Dieu!* you receive me like an enemy. My new government will oblige me to make long absences until I can exchange it for that of Lower Normandy; and I request, my dear, that you will show me a pleasant face while I am here."

The countess understood the meaning of the words, the feigned softness of which could no longer deceive her.

"I know my duty," she replied in a tone of sadness which the count mistook for tenderness.

The timid creature had too much purity and dignity to try, as some clever women would have done, to govern the count by putting calculation into her conduct, — a sort of prostitution by which noble souls feel degraded. Silently she turned away, to console her despair with Étienne.

"*Tête-Dieu!* shall I never be loved?" cried the count, seeing the tears in his wife's eyes as she left the room.

Thus incessantly threatened, motherhood became to the poor woman a passion which assumed the intensity

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that women put into their guilty affections. By a a species of occult communion, the secret of which is in the hearts of mothers, the child comprehended the peril that threatened him and dreaded the approach of his father. The terrible scene of which he had been a witness remained in his memory, and affected him like an illness; at the sound of the count's step his features contracted, and the mother's ear was not so alert as the instinct of her child. As he grew older this faculty created by terror increased, until, like the savages of America, Étienne could distinguish his father's step and hear his voice at immense distances. To witness the terror with which the count inspired her thus shared by her child made Étienne the more precious to the countess; their union was so strengthened that like two flowers on one twig they bent to the same wind, and lifted their heads with the same hope. In short, they were one life.

When the count again left home Jeanne was pregnant. This time she gave birth in due season, and not without great suffering, to a stout boy, who soon became the living image of his father, so that the hatred of the count for his first-born was increased by this event. To save her cherished child the countess agreed to all the plans which her husband formed for the happiness and wealth of his second son, whom he named Maximilien. Étienne was to be made a priest, in order to leave the property and titles of the house of Hérouville to his younger brother. At that cost the poor mother believed she insured the safety of her hated child.

No two brothers were ever more unlike than Étienne

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and Maximilien. The younger's taste was all for noise, violent exercises, and war, and the count felt for him the same excessive love that his wife felt for Étienne. By a tacit compact each parent took charge of the child of their heart. The duke (for about this time Henri IV. rewarded the services of the Seigneur d'Hérouville with a dukedom), not wishing, he said, to fatigue his wife, gave the nursing of the youngest boy to a stout peasant-woman chosen by Beauvouloir, and announced his determination to bring up the child in his own manner. He gave him, as time went on, a holy horror of books and study; taught him the mechanical knowledge required by a military career, made him a good rider, a good shot with an arquebuse, and skilful with his dagger. When the boy was big enough he took him to hunt, and let him acquire the savage language, the rough manners, the bodily strength, and the vivacity of look and speech which to his mind were the attributes of an accomplished man. The boy became, by the time he was twelve years old, a lion-cub ill-trained, as formidable in his way as the father himself, having free rein to tyrannize over every one, and using the privilege.

Étienne lived in the little house, or lodge, near the sea, given to him by his father, and fitted up by the duchess with some of the comforts and enjoyments to which he had a right. She herself spent the greater part of her time there. Together the mother and child roamed over the rocks and the shore, keeping strictly within the limits of the boy's domain of beach and shells, of moss and pebbles. The boy's terror of his father was so great that, like the Lapp, who lives and

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dies in his snow, he made a native land of his rocks and his cottage, and was terrified and uneasy if he passed his frontier.

The duchess, knowing that her child was not fitted to find happiness except in some humble and retired sphere, did not regret the fate that was thus imposed upon him; she used this enforced vocation to prepare him for a noble life of study and science, and she brought to the château Pierre de Sebonde as tutor to the future priest. Nevertheless, in spite of the tonsure imposed by the will of the father, she was determined that Étienne's education should not be wholly ecclesiastical, and took pains to secularize it. She employed Beauvouloir to teach him the mysteries of natural science; she herself superintended his studies, regulating them according to her child's strength, and enlivening them by teaching him Italian, and revealing to him little by little the poetic beauties of that language. While the duke rode off with Maximilien to the forest and the wild-boars at the risk of his life, Jeanne wandered with Étienne in the milky way of Petrarch's sonnets, or the mighty labyrinth of the Divina Commedia. Nature had endowed the youth, in compensation for his infirmities, with so melodious a voice that to hear him sing was a constant delight; his mother taught him music, and their tender, melancholy songs, accompanied by a mandolin, were the favorite recreation promised as a reward for some more arduous study required by the Abbé de Sebonde. Étienne listened to his mother with a passionate admiration she had never seen except in the eyes of Georges de Chaverny. The first time the poor woman found a mem-

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ory of her girlhood in the long, slow look of her child, she covered him with kisses; and she blushed when Étienne asked her why she seemed to love him better at that moment than ever before. She answered that every hour made him dearer to her. She found in the training of his soul, and in the culture of his mind, pleasures akin to those she had tasted in feeding him with her milk. She put all her pride and self-love into making him superior to herself, and not in ruling him. Hearts without tenderness covet dominion, but a true love treasures abnegation, that virtue of strength. When Étienne could not at first comprehend a demonstration, a theme, a theory, the poor mother, who was present at the lessons, seemed to long to infuse knowledge, as formerly she had given nourishment at the child's least cry. And then, what joy suffused her eyes when Étienne's mind seized the true sense of things and appropriated it. She proved, as Pierre de Sebonde said, that a mother is a dual being whose sensations cover two existences.

"Ah, if some woman as loving as I could infuse into him hereafter the life of love, how happy he might be!" she often thought.

But the fatal interests which consigned Étienne to the priesthood returned to her mind, and she kissed the hair that the scissors of the Church were to shear, leaving her tears upon them. Still, in spite of the unjust compact she had made with the duke, she could not see Étienne in her visions of the future as priest or cardinal; and the absolute forgetfulness of the father as to his first-born, enabled her to postpone the moment of putting him into Holy Orders.

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"There is time enough," she said to herself.

The day came when all her cares, inspired by a sentiment which seemed to enter into the flesh of her son and give it life, had their reward. Beauvouloir — that blessed man whose teachings had proved so precious to the child, and whose anxious glance at that frail idol had so often made the duchess tremble — declared that Étienne was now in a condition to live long years, provided no violent emotion came to convulse his delicate body. Étienne was then sixteen.

At that age he was just five feet, a height he never passed. His skin, as transparent and satiny as that of a little girl, showed a delicate tracery of blue veins; its whiteness was that of porcelain. His eyes, which were light blue and ineffably gentle, implored the protection of men and women; that beseeching look fascinated before the melody of his voice was heard to complete the charm. True modesty was in every feature. Long chestnut hair, smooth and very fine, was parted in the middle of his head into two bandeaus which curled at their extremity. His pale and hollow cheeks, his pure brow, lined with a few furrows, expressed a condition of suffering which was painful to witness. His mouth, always gracious, and adorned with very white teeth, wore the sort of fixed smile which we often see on the lips of the dying. His hands, white as those of a woman, were remarkably handsome. The habit of meditation had taught him to droop his head like a fragile flower, and the attitude was in keeping with his person; it was like the last grace that a great artist touches into a portrait to bring out its latent thought. Étienne's head was that

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of a delicate girl placed upon the weakly and deformed body of a man.

Poesy, the rich meditations of which make us roam like botanists through the vast fields of thought, the fruitful comparison of human ideas, the enthusiasm given by a clear conception of works of genius, came to be the inexhaustible and tranquil joys of the young man's solitary and dreamy life. Flowers, ravishing creatures whose destiny resembled his own, were his loves. Happy to see in her son the innocent passions which took the place of the rough contact with social life which he never could have borne, the duchess encouraged Étienne's tastes; she brought him Spanish *romanceros*, Italian *motets*, books, sonnets, poems. The library of Cardinal d'Hérouville came into Étienne's possession, the use of which filled his life. These readings, which his fragile health forbade him to continue for many hours at a time, and his rambles among the rocks of his domain, were interspersed with naïve meditations which kept him motionless for hours together before his smiling flowers — those sweet companions! — or crouching in a niche of the rocks before some species of algæ, a moss, a seaweed, studying their mysteries; seeking perhaps a rhythm in their fragrant depths, like a bee its honey. He often admired, without purpose, and without explaining his pleasure to himself, the slender lines on the petals of dark flowers, the delicacy of their rich tunics of gold or purple, green or azure, the fringes, so profusely beautiful, of their calixes or leaves, their ivory or velvet textures. Later, a thinker as well as a poet, he would detect the reason of these innumerable differ-

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ences in a single nature, by discovering the indication of unknown faculties; for from day to day he made progress in the interpretation of the Divine Word written upon all things here below.

These constant and secret researches into matters occult gave to Étienne's life the apparent somnolence of meditative genius. He would spend long days lying upon the shore, happy, a poet, all-unconscious of the fact. The sudden irruption of a gilded insect, the shimmering of the sun upon the ocean, the tremulous motion of the vast and limpid mirror of the waters, a shell, a crab, all was event and pleasure to that ingenuous young soul. And then to see his mother coming towards him, to hear from afar the rustle of her gown, to await her, to kiss her, to talk to her, to listen to her gave him such keen emotions that often a slight delay, a trifling fear would throw him into a violent fever. In him there was nought but soul, and in order that the weak, debilitated body should not be destroyed by the keen emotions of that soul, Étienne needed silence, caresses, peace in the landscape, and the love of a woman. For the time being, his mother gave him the love and the caresses; flowers and books entranced his solitude; his little kingdom of sand and shells, algæ and verdure seemed to him a universe, ever fresh and new.

Étienne imbibed all the benefits of this physical and absolutely innocent life, this mental and moral life so poetically extended. A child by form, a man in mind, he was equally angelic under either aspect. By his mother's influence his studies had removed his emotions to the region of ideas. The action of his life

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took place, therefore, in the moral world, far from the social world which would either have killed him or made him suffer. He lived by his soul and by his intellect. Laying hold of human thought by reading, he rose to thoughts that stirred in matter; he felt the thoughts of the air, he read the thoughts on the skies. Early he mounted that ethereal summit where alone he found the delicate nourishment that his soul needed; intoxicating food! which predestined him to sorrow whenever to these accumulated treasures should be added the riches of a passion rising suddenly in his heart.

If, at times, Jeanne de Saint-Savin dreaded that coming storm, she consoled herself with a thought which the otherwise sad vocation of her son put into her mind, — for the poor mother found no remedy for his sorrows except some lesser sorrow.

"He will be a cardinal," she thought; "he will live in the sentiment of Art, of which he will make himself the protector. He will love Art instead of loving a woman, and Art will not betray him."

The pleasures of this tender motherhood were incessantly held in check by sad reflections, born of the strange position in which Étienne was placed. The brothers had passed the adolescent age without knowing each other, without so much as even suspecting their rival existence. The duchess had long hoped for an opportunity, during the absence of her husband, to bind the two brothers to each other in some solemn scene by which she might enfold them both in her love. This hope, long cherished, had now faded. Far from wishing to bring about an intercourse be-

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tween the brothers, she feared an encounter between them, even more than between the father and son. Maximilien, who believed in evil only, might have feared that Étienne would some day claim his rights, and, so fearing, might have flung him into the sea with a stone around his neck. No son had ever less respect for a mother than he. As soon as he could reason he had seen the low esteem in which the duke held his wife. If the old man still retained some forms of decency in his manners to the duchess, Maximilien, unrestrained by his father, caused his mother many a grief.

Consequently, Bertrand was incessantly on the watch to prevent Maximilien from seeing Étienne, whose existence was carefully concealed. All the attendants of the castle cordially hated the Marquis de Saint-Sever (the name and title borne by the younger brother), and those who knew of the existence of the elder looked upon him as an avenger whom God was holding in reserve.

Étienne's future was therefore doubtful; he might even be persecuted by his own brother! The poor duchess had no relations to whom she could confide the life and interests of her cherished child. Would he not blame her when in his violet robes he longed to be a father as she had been a mother? These thoughts, and her melancholy life so full of secret sorrows were like a mortal illness kept at bay for a time by remedies. Her heart needed the wisest management, and those about her were cruelly inexpert in gentleness. What mother's heart would not have been torn at the sight of her eldest son, a man of mind and soul in whom a noble genius made itself felt, deprived

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of his rights, while the younger, hard and brutal, without talent, even military talent, was chosen to wear the ducal coronet and perpetuate the family? The house of Hérouville was discarding its own glory. Incapable of anger the gentle Jeanne de Saint-Savin could only bless and weep, but often she raised her eyes to heaven, asking it to account for this singular doom. Those eyes filled with tears when she thought that at her death her cherished child would be wholly orphaned and left exposed to the brutalities of a brother without faith or conscience.

Such emotions repressed, a first love unforgotten, so many sorrows ignored and hidden within her, — for she kept her keenest sufferings from her cherished child, — her joys embittered, her griefs unrelieved, all these shocks had weakened the springs of life and were developing in her system a slow consumption which day by day was gathering greater force. A last blow hastened it. She tried to warn the duke as to the results of Maximilien's education, and was repulsed; she saw that she could give no remedy to the shocking seeds which were germinating in the soul of her second child. From this moment began a period of decline which soon became so visible as to bring about the appointment of Beauvouloir to the post of physician to the house of Hérouville and the government of Normandy.

The former bonesetter came to live at the castle. In those days such posts belonged to learned men, who thus gained a living and the leisure necessary for a studious life and the accomplishment of scientific work. Beauvouloir had for some time desired the

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situation, because his knowledge and his fortune had won him numerous bitter enemies. In spite of the protection of a great family to whom he had done great services, he had recently been implicated in a criminal case, and the intervention of the Governor of Normandy, obtained by the duchess, had alone saved him from being brought to trial. The duke had no reason to repent this protection thus given to the old bonesetter. Beauvouloir saved the life of the Marquis de Saint-Sever in so dangerous an illness that any other physician would have failed in doing so. But the wounds of the duchess were too deep-seated and dated too far back to be cured, especially as they were constantly kept open in her home. When her sufferings warned this angel of many sorrows that her end was approaching, death was hastened by the gloomy apprehensions that filled her mind as to the future.

"What will become of my poor child without me?" was a thought renewed every hour like a bitter tide.

Obliged at last to keep her bed, the duchess failed rapidly, for she was then unable to see her son, forbidden as he was by her compact with his father to approach the house. The sorrow of the youth was equal to that of the mother. Inspired by the genius of repressed feeling, Étienne created a mystical language by which to communicate with his mother. He studied the resources of his voice like an opera-singer, and often he came beneath her windows to let her hear his melodiously melancholy voice, when Beauvouloir by a sign informed him she was alone. Formerly, as a babe, he had consoled his mother with his smiles, now, become a poet, he caressed her with his melodies.

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"Those songs give me life," said the duchess to Beauvouloir, inhaling the air that Étienne's voice made living.

At length the day came when the poor son's mourning began. Already he had felt mysterious correspondences between his emotions and the movements of the ocean. The divining of the thoughts of matter, a power with which his occult knowledge had invested him, made this phenomenon more eloquent to him than to all others. During the fatal night when he was taken to see his mother for the last time, the ocean was agitated by movements that to him were full of meaning. The heaving waters seemed to show that the sea was working intestinally; the swelling waves rolled in and spent themselves with lugubrious noises like the howling of a dog in distress. Unconsciously, Étienne found himself saying: —

"What does it want of me? It quivers and moans like a living creature. My mother has often told me that the ocean was in horrible convulsions on the night when I was born. Something is about to happen to me."

This thought kept him standing before his window with his eyes sometimes on his mother's windows where a faint light trembled, sometimes on the ocean which continued to moan. Suddenly Beauvouloir knocked on the door of his room, opened it, and showed on his saddened face the reflection of some new misfortune.

"Monseigneur," he said, "Madame la duchesse is in so sad a state that she wishes to see you. All precautions are taken that no harm shall happen to you in the castle; but we must be prudent; to see her you will have to pass through the room of Monseigneur the duke, the room where you were born."

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These words brought the tears to Étienne's eyes, and he said:—

"The Ocean *did* speak to me!"

Mechanically he allowed himself to be led towards the door of the tower which gave entrance to the private way leading to the duchess's room. Bertrand was awaiting him, lantern in hand. Étienne reached the library of the Cardinal d'Hérouville, and there he was made to wait with Beauvouloir while Bertrand went on to unlock the other doors, and make sure that the hated son could pass through his father's house without danger. The duke did not awake. Advancing with light steps, Étienne and Beauvouloir heard in that immense château no sound but the plaintive groans of the dying woman. Thus the very circumstances attending the birth of Étienne were renewed at the death of his mother. The same tempest, same agony, same dread of awaking the pitiless giant, who, on this occasion at least, slept soundly. Bertrand, as a further precaution, took Étienne in his arms and carried him through the duke's room, intending to give some excuse as to the state of the duchess if the duke awoke and detected him. Étienne's heart was horribly wrung by the same fears which filled the minds of these faithful servants; but this emotion prepared him, in a measure, for the sight that met his eyes in that signorial room, which he had never re-entered since the fatal day when, as a child, the paternal curse had driven him from it.

On the great bed, where happiness never came, he looked for his beloved, and scarcely found her, so emaciated was she. White as her own laces, with

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scarcely a breath left, she gathered up all her strength to clasp Étienne's hand, and to give him her whole soul, as heretofore, in a look. Chaverny had bequeathed to her all his life in a last farewell. Beauvouloir and Bertrand, the mother and the sleeping duke were all once more assembled. Same place, same scene, same actors! but this was funereal grief in place of the joys of motherhood; the night of death instead of the dawn of life. At that moment the storm, threatened by the melancholy moaning of the sea since sundown, suddenly burst forth.

"Dear flower of my life!" said the mother, kissing her son. "You were taken from my bosom in the midst of a tempest, and in a tempest I am taken from you. Between these storms all life has been stormy to me, except the hours I have spent with you. This is my last joy, mingled with my last pangs. Adieu, my only love! adieu, dear image of two souls that will soon be reunited! Adieu, my only joy — pure joy! adieu, my own beloved!"

"Let me follow thee!" cried Étienne.

"It would be your better fate!" she said, two tears rolling down her livid cheeks; for, as in former days, her eyes seemed to read the future. "Did any one see him?" she asked of the two men.

At this instant the duke turned in his bed; they all trembled.

"Even my last joy is mingled with pain," murmured the duchess. "Take him away! take him away!"

"Mother, I would rather see you a moment longer and die!" said the poor lad, as he fainted by her side.

At a sign from the duchess, Bertrand took Étienne

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in his arms, and, showing him for the last time to his mother, who kissed him with a last look, he turned to carry him away, awaiting the final order of the dying mother.

"Love him well!" she said to the physician and Bertrand; "he has no protectors but you and Heaven."

Prompted by an instinct which never misleads a mother, she had felt the pity of the old retainer for the eldest son of a house, for which his veneration was only comparable to that of the Jews for their Holy City, Jerusalem. As for Beauvouloir, the compact between himself and the duchess had long been signed. The two servitors, deeply moved to see their mistress forced to bequeath her noble child to none but themselves, promised by a solemn gesture to be the providence of their young master, and the mother had faith in that gesture.

The duchess died towards morning, mourned by the servants of the household, who, for all comment, were heard to say beside her grave, "She was a comely woman, sent from Paradise."

Étienne's sorrow was the most intense, the most lasting of sorrows, and wholly silent. He wandered no more among his rocks; he felt no strength to read or sing. He spent whole days crouched in the crevice of a rock, caring nought for the inclemency of the weather, motionless, fastened to the granite like the lichen that grew upon it; weeping seldom, lost in one sole thought, immense, infinite as the ocean, and, like that ocean, taking a thousand forms, — terrible, tempestuous, tender, calm. It was more than sorrow; it

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was a new existence, an irrevocable destiny, dooming this innocent creature to smile no more. There are pangs which, like a drop of blood cast into flowing water, stain the whole current instantly. The stream, renewed from its source, restores the purity of its surface; but with Étienne the source itself was polluted, and each new current brought its own gall.

Bertrand, in his old age, had retained the superintendence of the stables, so as not to lose the habit of authority in the household. His house was not far from that of Étienne, so that he was ever at hand to watch over the youth with the persistent affection and simple wiliness characteristic of old soldiers. He checked his roughness when speaking to the poor lad; softly he walked in rainy weather to fetch him from his revery in his crevice to the house. He put his pride into filling the mother's place, so that her child might find, if not her love, at least the same attentions. This pity resembled tenderness. Étienne bore, without complaint or resistance, these attentions of the old retainer, but too many links were now broken between the hated child and other creatures to admit of any keen affection at present in his heart. Mechanically he allowed himself to be protected; he became, as it were, an intermediary creature between man and plant, or, perhaps one might say, between man and God. To what shall we compare a being to whom all social laws, all the false sentiments of the world were unknown, and who kept his ravishing innocence by obeying nought but the instincts of his heart?

Nevertheless, in spite of his sombre melancholy, he came to feel the need of loving, of finding another

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mother, another soul for his soul. But, separated from civilization by an iron wall, it was well-nigh impossible to meet with a being who had flowered like himself. Instinctively seeking another self to whom to confide his thoughts and whose life might blend with his life, he ended in sympathizing with the Ocean. The sea became to him a living, thinking being. Always in presence of that vast creation, the hidden marvels of which contrast so grandly with those of earth, he discovered the meaning of many mysteries. Familiar from his cradle with the infinitude of those liquid fields, the sea and the sky taught him many poems. To him, all was variety in that vast picture so monotonous to some. Like other men whose souls dominate their bodies, he had a piercing sight which could reach to enormous distances and seize, with admirable ease and without fatigue, the fleeting tints of the clouds, the passing shimmer of the waters. On days of perfect stillness his eyes could see the manifold tints of the ocean, which to him, like the face of a woman, had its physiognomy, its smiles, ideas, caprices; there green and sombre; here smiling and azure; sometimes uniting its brilliant lines with the hazy gleams of the horizon, or again, softly swaying beneath the orange-tinted heavens. For him all-glorious fêtes were celebrated at sundown when the star of day poured its red colors on the waves in a crimson flood. For him the sea was gay and sparkling and spirited when it quivered in repeating the noonday light from a thousand dazzling facets; to him it revealed its wondrous melancholy; it made him weep whenever, calm and sad, it reflected the dun-gray sky surcharged with clouds

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He had learned the mute language of that vast creation. The flux and reflux of its waters were to him a melodious breathing which uttered in his ear a sentiment; he felt and comprehended its inward meaning. No mariner, no man of science, could have predicted better than he the slightest wrath of the ocean, the faintest change on that vast face. By the manner of the waves as they rose and died away upon the shore, he could foresee tempests, surges, squalls, the height of tides, or calms. When night had spread its veil upon the sky, he still could see the sea in its twilight mystery, and talk with it. At all times he shared its fecund life, feeling in his soul the tempest when it was angry; breathing its rage in its hissing breath; running with its waves as they broke in a thousand liquid fringes upon the rocks. He felt himself intrepid, free, and terrible as the sea itself; like it, he bounded and fell back; he kept its solemn silence; he copied its sudden pause. In short, he had wedded the sea; it was now his confidant, his friend. In the morning when he crossed the glowing sands of the beach and came upon his rocks, he divined the temper of the ocean from a single glance; he could see landscapes on its surface; he hovered above the face of the waters, like an angel coming down from heaven. When the joyous, mischievous white mists cast their gossamer before him, like a veil before the face of a bride, he followed their undulations and caprices with the joy of a lover. His thought, married with that grand expression of the divine thought, consoled him in his solitude, and the thousand outlooks of his soul peopled its desert with glorious fantasies. He ended

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at last by divining in the motions of the sea its close communion with the celestial system; he perceived nature in its harmonious whole, from the blade of grass to the wandering stars which seek, like seeds driven by the wind, to plant themselves in ether.

Pure as an angel, virgin of those ideas which degrade mankind, naïve as a child, he lived like a sea-bird, a gull, or a flower, prodigal of the treasures of poetic imagination, and possessed of a divine knowledge, the fruitful extent of which he contemplated in solitude. Incredible mingling of two creations! sometimes he rose to God in prayer; sometimes he descended, humble and resigned, to the quiet happiness of animals. To him the stars were the flowers of night, the birds his friends, the sun was a father. Everywhere he found the soul of his mother; often he saw her in the clouds; he spoke to her; they communicated, veritably, by celestial visions; on certain days he could hear her voice and see her smile; in short, there were days when he had not lost her. God seemed to have given him the power of the hermits of old, to have endowed him with some perfected inner senses which penetrated to the spirit of all things. Unknown moral forces enabled him to go farther than other men into the secrets of the Immortal labor. His yearnings, his sorrows were the links that united him to the unseen world; he went there, armed with his love, to seek his mother; realizing thus, with the sublime harmonies of ecstasy, the symbolic enterprise of Orpheus.

Often, when crouching in the crevice of some rock, capriciously curled up in his granite grotto, the en-

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trance to which was as narrow as that of a charcoal kiln, he would sink into involuntary sleep, his figure softly lighted by the warm rays of the sun which crept through the fissures and fell upon the dainty seaweeds that adorned his retreat, the veritable nest of a sea-bird. The sun, his sovereign lord, alone told him that he had slept, by measuring the time he had been absent from his watery landscapes, his golden sands, his shells and pebbles. Across a light as brilliant as that from heaven he saw the cities of which he read; he looked with amazement, but without envy, at courts and kings, battles, men, and buildings. These daylight dreams made dearer to him his precious flowers, his clouds, his sun, his granite rocks. To attach him the more to his solitary existence, an angel seemed to reveal to him the abysses of the moral world and the terrible shocks of civilization. He felt that his soul, if torn by the throng of men, would perish like a pearl dropped from the crown of a princess into mud.

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PART SECOND.

HOW THE SON DIED.

IV.

AN HEIR.

In 1617, twenty and some years after the horrible night during which Étienne came into the world, the Duc d'Hérouville, then seventy-six years old, broken, decrepit, almost dead, was sitting at sunset in an immense arm-chair, before the gothic window of his bedroom, at the place where his wife had so vainly implored, by the sounds of the horn wasted on the air, the help of men and heaven. You might have thought him a body resurrected from the grave. His once energetic face, stripped of its sinister aspect by old age and suffering, was ghastly in color, matching the long meshes of white hair which fell around his bald head, the yellow skull of which seemed softening. The warrior and the fanatic still shone in those yellow eyes, tempered now by religious sentiment. Devotion had cast a monastic tone upon the face, formerly so hard, but now marked with tints which softened its expression. The reflections of the setting sun colored with a faintly ruddy tinge the head, which, in spite of

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all infirmities, was still vigorous. The feeble body, wrapped in brown garments, gave, by its heavy attitude and the absence of all movement, a vivid impression of the monotonous existence, the terrible repose of this man once so active, so enterprising, so vindictive.

"Enough!" he said to his chaplain.

That venerable old man was reading aloud the Gospel, standing before the master in a respectful attitude. The duke, like an old menagerie lion which has reached a decrepitude that is still full of majesty, turned to another white-haired man and said, holding out a fleshless arm covered with sparse hairs, still sinewy, but without vigor: —

"Your turn now, bonesetter. How am I to-day?"

"Doing well, monseigneur; the fever has ceased. You will live many years yet."

"I wish I could see Maximilien here," continued the duke, with a smile of satisfaction. "My fine boy! He commands a company of the King's Guard. The Maréchal d'Ancre takes care of my lad, and our gracious Queen Marie thinks of allying him nobly, now that he is created Duc de Nivron. My race will be worthily continued. The lad performed prodigies of valor in the attack on —"

At this moment Bertrand entered, holding a letter in his hand.

"What is this?" said the old lord, eagerly.

"A despatch brought by a courier sent to you by the king," replied Bertrand.

"The king, and not the queen-mother!" exclaimed the duke. "What is happening? Have the Hugue-

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nots taken arms again? *Tête-Dieu!*" cried the old man, rising to his feet and casting a flaming glance at his three companions, "I 'll arm my soldiers once more, and, with Maximilien by my side, Normandy shall —"

"Sit down, my good seigneur," said Beauvouloir, uneasy at seeing the duke give way to an excitement that was dangerous to a convalescent.

"Read it, Maître Corbineau," said the old man, holding out the missive to his confessor.

These four personages formed a tableau full of instruction upon human life. The man-at-arms, the priest, and the physician, all three standing before their master, who was seated in his arm-chair, were casting pallid glances about them, each presenting one of those ideas which end by possessing the whole man on the verge of the tomb. Strongly illumined by a last ray of the setting sun, these silent men composed a picture of aged melancholy fertile in contrasts. The sombre and solemn chamber, where nothing had been changed in twenty-five years, made a frame for this poetic canvas, full of extinguished passions, saddened by death, tinctured by religion.

"The Maréchal d'Ancre has been killed on the Pont du Louvre by order of the king, and — O God!"

"Go on!" cried the duke.

"Monsieur le Duc de Nivron —"

"Well?"

"Is dead!"

The duke dropped his head upon his breast with a great sigh, but was silent. At those words, at that sigh, the three old men looked at each other. It

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seemed to them as though the illustrious and opulent house of Hérouville was disappearing before their eyes like a sinking ship.

"The Master above," said the duke, casting a terrible glance at the heavens, "is ungrateful to me. He forgets the great deeds I have performed for his holy cause."

"God has avenged himself!" said the priest, in a solemn voice.

"Put that man in the dungeon!" cried the duke.

"You can silence me far more easily than you can your conscience."

The duke sank back in thought.

"My house to perish! My name to be extinct! I will marry! I will have a son!" he said, after a long pause.

Though the expression of despair on the duke's face was truly awful, the bonesetter could not repress a smile. At that instant a song, fresh as the evening breeze, pure as the sky, equable as the color of the ocean, rose above the murmur of the waves, to cast its charm over Nature herself. The melancholy of that voice, the melody of its tones shed, as it were, a perfume rising to the soul; its harmony rose like a vapor filling the air; it poured a balm on sorrows, or rather it consoled them by expressing them. The voice mingled with the gurgle of the waves so perfectly that it seemed to rise from the bosom of the waters. That song was sweeter to the ears of those old men than the tenderest word of love on the lips of a young girl; it brought religious hope into their souls like a voice from heaven.

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"What is that?" asked the duke.

"The little nightingale is singing," said Bertrand; "all is not lost, either for him or for us."

"What do you call a nightingale?"

"That is the name we have given to monseigneur's eldest son," replied Bertrand.

"My son!" cried the old man; "have I a son? — a son to bear my name and to perpetuate it!"

He rose to his feet and began to walk about the room with steps in turn precipitate and slow. Then he made an imperious gesture, sending every one away from him except the priest.

The next morning the duke, leaning on the arm of his old retainer Bertrand, walked along the shore and among the rocks looking for the son he had so long hated. He saw him from afar in a recess of the granite rocks, lying carelessly extended in the sun, his head on a tuft of mossy grass, his feet gracefully drawn up beneath him. So lying, Étienne was like a swallow at rest. As soon as the tall old man appeared upon the beach, the sound of his steps faintly mingling with the voice of the waves, the young man turned his head, gave the cry of a startled bird, and disappeared as if into the rock itself, like a mouse darting so quickly into its hole that we doubt if we have even seen it.

"Hey! *tête-Dieu!* where has he hid himself?" cried the duke, reaching the rock beside which his son had been lying.

"He is there," replied Bertrand, pointing to a narrow crevice, the edges of which had been polished smooth by the repeated assaults of the high tide.

"Étienne, my beloved son!" called the old man.

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The hated child made no reply. For hours the duke entreated, threatened, implored in turn, receiving no response. Sometimes he was silent, with his ear at the cleft of the rock, where even his enfeebled hearing could detect the beating of Étienne's heart, the quick pulsations of which echoed from the sonorous roof of his rocky hiding-place.

"At least *he* lives!" said the old man, in a heart-rending voice.

Towards the middle of the day, the father, reduced to despair, had recourse to prayer: —

"Étienne," he said, "my dear Étienne, God has punished me for disowning you. He has deprived me of your brother. To-day you are my only child. I love you more than I love myself. I see the wrong I have done; I know that you have in your veins my blood with that of your mother, whose misery was my doing. Come to me; I will try to make you forget my cruelty; I will cherish you for all that I have lost. Étienne, you are the Duc de Nivron, and you will be, after me, the Duc d'Hérouville, peer of France, knight of the Orders and of the Golden Fleece, captain of a hundred men-at-arms, grand-bailiff of Bessin, Governor of Normandy, lord of twenty-seven domains counting sixty-nine steeples, Marquis de Saint-Sever. You shall take to wife the daughter of a prince. Would you have me die of grief? Come! come to me! or here I kneel until I see you. Your old father prays you, he humbles himself before his child as before God himself."

The hated son paid no heed to this language bristling with social ideas and vanities he did not comprehend; his soul remained under the impressions of unconquer-

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able terror. He was silent, suffering great agony. Towards evening the old seigneur, after exhausting all formulas of language, all resources of entreaty, all repentant promises, was overcome by a sort of religious contrition. He knelt down upon the sand and made a vow: —

"I swear to build a chapel to Saint-Jean and Saint-Étienne, the patrons of my wife and son, and to found one hundred masses in honor of the Virgin, if God and the saints will restore to me the affection of my son, the Duc de Nivron, here present."

He remained on his knees in deep humility with clasped hands, praying. Finding that his son, the hope of his name, still did not come to him, great tears rose in his eyes, dry so long, and rolled down his withered cheeks. At this moment, Étienne, hearing no further sounds, glided to the opening of his grotto like a young adder craving the sun. He saw the tears of the stricken old man, he recognized the signs of a true grief, and, seizing his father's hand, he kissed him, saying in the voice of an angel: —

"Oh, mother! forgive me!"

In the fever of his happiness the old duke lifted his feeble offspring in his arms and carried him, trembling like an abducted girl, toward the castle. As he felt the palpitation of his son's body he strove to reassure him, kissing him with all the caution he might have shown in touching a delicate flower; and speaking in the gentlest tones he had ever in his life used, in order to soothe him.

"God's truth! you are like my poor Jeanne, dear child!" he said. "Teach me what would give you

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pleasure, and I will give you all you can desire. Grow strong! be well! I will show you how to ride a mare as pretty and gentle as yourself. Nothing shall ever thwart or trouble you. *Tête-Dieu!* all things bow to me as the reeds to the wind. I give you unlimited power. I bow to you myself as the god of the family."

The father carried his son into the lordly chamber where the mother's sad existence had been spent. Étienne turned away and leaned against the window from which his mother was wont to make him signals announcing the departure of his persecutor, who now, without his knowing why, had become his slave, like those gigantic genii which the power of a fairy places at the order of a young prince. That fairy was Feudality. Beholding once more the melancholy room where his eyes were accustomed to contemplate the ocean, tears came into those eyes; recollections of his long misery, mingled with melodious memories of the pleasures he had had in the only love that was granted to him, maternal love, all rushed together upon his heart and developed there, like a poem at once terrible and delicious. The emotions of this youth, accustomed to live in contemplations of ecstasy as others in the excitements of the world, resembled none of the habitual emotions of mankind.

"Will he live?" said the old man, amazed at the fragility of his heir, and holding his breath as he leaned over him.

"I can live only here," replied Étienne, who had heard him, simply.

"Well, then, this room shall be yours, my child."

"What is that noise?" asked the young man, hear-

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ing the retainers of the castle who were gathering in the guard-room, whither the duke had summoned them to present his son.

"Come!" said the father, taking him by the hand and leading him into the great hall.

At this epoch of our history, a duke and peer, with great possessions, holding public offices and the government of a province, lived the life of a prince; the cadets of his family did not revolt at serving him. He had his household guard and officers; the first lieutenant of his ordnance company was to him what, in our day, an aide-de-camp is to a marshal. A few years later, Cardinal de Richelieu had his body-guard. Several princes allied to the royal house — Guise, Condé, Nevers, and Vendôme, etc.— had pages chosen among the sons of the best families, — a last lingering custom of departed chivalry. The wealth of the Duc d'Hérouville, and the antiquity of his Norman race indicated by his name (*herus villæ*), permitted him to imitate the magnificence of families who were in other respects his inferiors, — those, for instance, of Épernon, Luynes, Balagny, d'O, Zamet, regarded as parvenus, but living, nevertheless, as princes. It was therefore an imposing spectacle for poor Étienne to see the assemblage of retainers of all kinds attached to the service of his father.

The duke seated himself on a chair of state placed under a *solium*, or dais of carved wood, above a platform raised by several steps, from which, in certain provinces, the great seigneurs still delivered judgment on their vassals, — a vestige of feudality which disappeared under the reign of Richelieu. These thrones,

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like the warden's benches of the churches, have now become objects of collection as curiosities. When Étienne was placed beside his father on that raised platform, he shuddered at feeling himself the centre to which all eyes turned.

"Do not tremble," said the duke, bending his bald head to his son's ear; "these people are only our servants."

Through the dusky light produced by the setting sun, the rays of which were reddening the leaded panes of the windows, Étienne saw the bailiff, the captain and lieutenant of the guard, with certain of their men-at-arms, the chaplain, the secretaries, the doctor, the majordomo, the ushers, the steward, the huntsmen, the game-keeper, the grooms, and the valets. Though all these people stood in respectful attitudes, induced by the terror the old man inspired in even the most important persons under his command, a low murmur, caused by curiosity and expectation, made itself heard. That sound oppressed the bosom of the young man, who felt for the first time in his life the influence of the heavy atmosphere produced by the breath of many persons in a closed hall. His senses, accustomed to the pure and wholesome air from the sea, were shocked with a rapidity that proved the supersensitiveness of his organs. A horrible palpitation, due no doubt to some defect in the organization of his heart, shook him with reiterated blows when his father, showing himself to the assemblage like some majestic old lion, pronounced in a solemn voice the following brief address: —

"My friends, this is my son Étienne, my first-born

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son, my heir presumptive, the Duc de Nivron, to whom the king will no doubt grant the honors of his deceased brother. I present him to you that you may acknowledge him and obey him as myself. I warn you that if you, or any one in this province, over which I am governor, does aught to displease the young duke, or thwart him in any way whatsoever, it would be better, should it come to my knowledge, that that man had never been born. You hear me. Return now to your duties, and God guide you. The obsequies of my son Maximilien will take place here when his body arrives. The household will go into mourning eight days hence. Later, we shall celebrate the accession of my son Étienne here present."

"*Vive monseigneur!* Long live the race of Hérouville!" cried the people in a roar that shook the castle.

The valets brought in torches to illuminate the hall. That hurrah, the sudden lights, the sensations caused by his father's speech, joined to those he was already feeling, overcame the young man, who fainted completely and fell into a chair, leaving his slender womanly hand in the broad palm of his father. As the duke, who had signed to the lieutenant of his company to come nearer, saying to him, "I am fortunate, Baron d'Artagnon, in being able to repair my loss; behold my son!" he felt an icy hand in his. Turning round, he looked at the new Duc de Nivron, and, thinking him dead, he uttered a cry of terror which appalled the assemblage.

Beauvouloir rushed to the platform, took the young man in his arms, and carried him away, saying to his

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master, "You have killed him by not preparing him for this ceremony."

"He can never have a child if he is like that!" cried the duke, following Beauvouloir into the seignorial chamber, where the doctor laid the young heir upon the bed.

"Well, what think you?" asked the duke presently.

"It is not serious," replied the old physician, showing Étienne, who was now revived by a cordial, a few drops of which he had given him on a bit of sugar, a new and precious substance which the apothecaries were selling for its weight in gold.

"Take this, old rascal!" said the duke, offering his purse to Beauvouloir, "and treat him like the son of a king! If he dies by your fault, I'll burn you myself on a gridiron."

"If you continue to be so violent, the Duc de Nivron will die by your own act," said the doctor, roughly. "Leave him now; he will go to sleep."

"Good-night, my love," said the old man, kissing his son upon the forehead.

"Good-night, father," replied the youth, whose voice made the father — thus named by Étienne for the first time — quiver.

The duke took Beauvouloir by the arm and led him to the next room, where, having pushed him into the recess of a window, he said: —

"*Ah ça!* old rascal, now we will understand each other."

That term, a favorite sign of graciousness with the duke, made the doctor, no longer a mere bonesetter, smile.

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"You know," said the duke, continuing, "that I wish you no harm. You have twice delivered my poor Jeanne, you cured my son Maximilien of an illness, in short, you are a part of my household. Poor Maximilien! I will avenge him; I take upon myself to kill the man who killed him. The whole future of the house of Hérouville is now in your hands. You alone can know if there is in that poor abortion the stuff that can breed a Hérouville. You hear me. What think you?"

"His life on the seashore has been so chaste and so pure that nature is sounder in him than it would have been had he lived in your world. But so delicate a body is the very humble servant of the soul. Monseigneur Étienne must himself choose his wife; all things in him must be the work of nature and not of your will. He will love artlessly, and will accomplish by his heart's desire that which you wish him to do for the sake of your name. But if you give your son a proud, ungainly woman of the world, a great lady, he will flee to his rocks. More than that; though sudden terror would surely kill him, I believe that any sudden emotion would be equally fatal. My advice therefore is to leave Étienne to choose for himself, at his own pleasure, the path of love. Listen to me, monseigneur; you are a great and powerful prince, but you understand nothing of such matters. Give me your entire confidence, your unlimited confidence, and you shall have a grandson."

"If I obtain a grandson by any sorcery whatever, I will have you ennobled. Yes, difficult as it may be, I'll make an old rascal into a man of honor; you shall

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be Baron de Forcalier. Employ your magic, white or black, appeal to your witches' sabbath or the novenas of the Church; what care I how 't is done, provided my line male continues?"

"I know," said Beauvouloir, "a whole chapter of sorcerers capable of destroying your hopes; they are none other than *yourself*, monseigneur. I know you. To-day you want male lineage at any price; to-morrow you will seek to have it on your own conditions; you will torment your son."

"God preserve me from it!"

"Well, then, go away from here; go to court, where the death of the maréchal and the emancipation of the king must have turned everything topsy turvy, and where you certainly have business, if only to obtain the marshal's baton which was promised to you. Leave Monseigneur Étienne to me. But give me your word of honor as a gentleman to approve whatever I may do for him."

The duke struck his hand into that of his physician as a sign of complete acceptance, and retired to his own apartments.

When the days of a high and mighty seigneur are numbered, the physician becomes a personage of importance in the household. It is, therefore, not surprising to see a former bonesetter so familiar with the Duc d'Hérouville. Apart from the illegitimate ties which connected him, by marriage, to this great family and certainly militated in his favor, his sound good sense had so often been proved by the duke that the old man had now become his master's most valued counsellor. Beauvouloir was the Coyctier of this Louis

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XI. Nevertheless, and no matter how valuable his knowledge might be, he never obtained over the governor of Normandy, in whom was the ferocity of religious warfare, as much influence as feudality exercised over that rugged nature. For this reason the physician was confident that the prejudices of the noble would thwart the desires and the vows of the father.

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V.

GABRIELLE.

GREAT physician that he was, Beauvouloir saw plainly that to a being so delicately organized as Étienne marriage must come as a slow and gentle inspiration, communicating new powers to his being and vivifying it with the fires of love. As he had said to the father, to impose a wife on Étienne would be to kill him. Above all it was important that the young recluse should not be alarmed at the thought of marriage, of which he knew nothing, or be made aware of the object of his father's wishes. This unknown poet conceived as yet only the beautiful and noble passion of Petrarch for Laura, of Dante for Beatrice. Like his mother he was all pure love and soul; the opportunity to love must be given to him, and then the event should be awaited, not compelled. A command to love would have dried within him the very sources of his life.

Maître Antoine Beauvouloir was a father; he had a daughter brought up under conditions which made her the wife for Étienne. It was so difficult to foresee the events which would make a son, disowned by his father and destined to the priesthood, the presumptive heir of the house of Hérouville that Beauvouloir had never until now noticed the resemblance between

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the fate of Étienne and that of Gabrielle. A sudden idea which now came to him was inspired more by his devotion to those two beings than by ambition.

His wife, in spite of his great skill, had died in childbed leaving him a daughter whose health was so frail that it seemed as if the mother had bequeathed to her fruit the germs of death. Beauvouloir loved his Gabrielle as old men love their only child. His science and his incessant care had given factitious life to this frail creature, which he cultivated as a florist cultivates an exotic plant. He had kept her hidden from all eyes on his estate of Forcalier, where she was protected against the dangers of the time by the general good-will felt for a man to whom all owed gratitude, and whose scientific powers inspired in the ignorant minds of the country-people a superstitious awe.

By attaching himself to the house of Hérouville, Beauvouloir had increased still further the immunity he enjoyed in the province, and had thwarted all attempts of his enemies by means of his powerful influence with the governor. He had taken care, however, in coming to reside at the castle, not to bring with him the flower he cherished in secret at Forcalier, a domain more important for its landed value than for the house then upon it, but with which he expected to obtain for his daughter an establishment in conformity with his views. While promising the duke a posterity and requiring his master's word of honor to approve his acts, he thought suddenly of Gabrielle, of that sweet child whose mother had been neglected and forgotten by the duke as he had also neglected and forgotten his son Étienne.

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He awaited the departure of his master before putting his plan in execution; foreseeing that, if the duke became aware of it, the enormous difficulties in the way would be from the first insurmountable.

Beauvouloir's house at Forcalier had a southern exposure on the slope of one of those gentle hills which surround the vales of Normandy; a thick wood shielded it from the north; high walls and Norman hedges and deep ditches made the inclosure inviolable. The garden, descending by an easy incline to the river which watered the valley, had a thick double hedge at its foot, forming a natural embankment. Within this double hedge wound a hidden path, led by the sinuosities of the stream, which the willows, oaks, and beeches made as leafy as a woodland glade. From the house to this natural rampart stretched a mass of verdure peculiar to that rich soil; a beautiful green sheet bordered by a fringe of rare trees, the tones of which formed a tapestry of exquisite coloring: there, the silvery tints of a pine stood forth against the darker green of several alders; here, before a group of sturdy oaks a slender poplar lifted its palm-like figure, ever swaying; farther on, the weeping willows drooped their pale foliage between the stout, round-headed walnuts. This belt of trees enabled the occupants of the house to go down at all hours to the river-bank fearless of the rays of the sun.

The façade of the house, before which lay the yellow ribbon of a gravelled terrace, was shaded by a wooden gallery, around which climbing plants were twining, and tossing in this month of May their various blossoms into the very windows of the second floor. Without

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being really vast, this garden seemed immense from the manner in which its vistas were cut; points of view, cleverly contrived through the rise and fall of the ground, married themselves, as it were, to those of the valley, where the eye could rove at will. Following the instincts of her thought, Gabrielle could either enter the solitude of a narrow space, seeing naught but the thick green and the blue of the sky above the tree-tops, or she could hover above a glorious prospect, letting her eyes follow those many-shaded green lines, from the brilliant colors of the foreground to the pure tones of the horizon on which they lost themselves, sometimes in the blue ocean of the atmosphere, sometimes in the cumuli that floated above it.

Watched over by her grandmother and served by her former nurse, Gabrielle Beauvouloir never left this modest home except for the parish church, the steeple of which could be seen at the summit of the hill, whither she was always accompanied by her grandmother, her nurse, and her father's valet. She had reached the age of seventeen in that sweet ignorance which the rarity of books allowed a girl to retain without appearing extraordinary at a period when educated women were thought phenomenal. The house had been to her a convent, but with more freedom, less enforced prayer, — a retreat where she had lived beneath the eye of a pious old woman and the protection of her father, the only man she had ever known. This absolute solitude, necessitated from her birth by the apparent feebleness of her constitution, had been carefully maintained by Beauvouloir.

As Gabrielle grew up, such constant care and the

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purity of the atmosphere had gradually strengthened her fragile youth. Still, the wise physician did not deceive himself when he saw the pearly tints around his daughter's eyes soften or darken or flush according to the emotions that overcame her; the weakness of the body and the strength of the soul were made plain to him in that one indication which his long experience enabled him to understand. Besides this, Gabrielle's celestial beauty made him fearful of attempts too common in times of violence and sedition. Many reasons had thus induced the good father to deepen the shadows and increase the solitude that surrounded his daughter, whose excessive sensibility alarmed him; a passion, an assault, a shock of any kind might wound her mortally. Though she seldom deserved blame, a mere word of reproach overcame her; she kept it in the depths of her heart, where it fostered a meditative melancholy; she would turn away weeping, and wept long.

Thus the moral education of the young girl required no less care than her physical education. The old physician had been compelled to cease telling stories, such as all children love, to his daughter; the impressions she received were too vivid. Wise through long practice, he endeavored to develop her body in order to deaden the blows which a soul so powerful gave to it. Gabrielle was all of life and love to her father, his only heir, and never had he hesitated to procure for her such things as might produce the results he aimed for. He carefully removed from her knowledge books, pictures, music, all those creations of art which awaken thought. Aided by his mother he interested

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Gabrielle in manual exercises. Tapestry, sewing, lace-making, the culture of flowers, household cares, the storage of fruits, in short, the most material occupations of life, were the food given to the mind of this charming creature. Beauvouloir brought her beautiful spinning-wheels, finely-carved chests, rich carpets, pottery of Bernard de Palissy, tables, prie-dieus, chairs beautifully wrought and covered with precious stuffs, embroidered linen and jewels. With an instinct given by paternity, the old man always chose his presents among the works of that fantastic order called arabesque, which, speaking neither to the soul nor the senses, addresses the mind only by its creations of pure fantasy.

Thus — singular to say! — the life which the hatred of a father had imposed on Étienne d'Hérouville, paternal love had induced Beauvouloir to impose on Gabrielle. In both these children the soul was killing the body; and without an absolute solitude, ordained by cruelty for one and procured by science for the other, each was likely to succumb, — he to terror, she beneath the weight of a too keen emotion of love. But, alas! instead of being born in a region of gorse and moor, in the midst of an arid nature of hard and angular shapes, such as all the great painters have given as backgrounds to their Virgins, Gabrielle lived in a rich and fertile valley. Beauvouloir could not destroy the harmonious grouping of the native woods, the graceful upspringing of the wild flowers, the cool softness of the grassy slopes, the love expressed in the intertwining growth of the clustering plants. Such ever-living poesies have a language heard, rather than understood

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by the poor girl, who yielded to vague misery among the shadows. Across the misty ideas suggested by her long study of this beautiful landscape, observed at all seasons and through all the variations of a marine atmosphere in which the fogs of England come to die and the sunshine of France is born, there rose within her soul a distant light, a dawn which pierced the darkness in which her father kept her.

Beauvouloir had never withdrawn his daughter from the influence of Divine love; to a deep admiration of nature she joined her girlish adoration of the Creator, springing thus into the first way open to the feelings of womanhood. She loved God, she loved Jesus, the Virgin and the saints; she loved the Church and its pomps; she was Catholic after the manner of Saint Teresa, who saw in Jesus an eternal spouse, a continual marriage. Gabrielle gave herself up to this passion of strong souls with so touching a simplicity that she would have disarmed the most brutal seducer by the infantine naïveté of her language.

Whither was this life of innocence leading Gabrielle? How teach a mind as pure as the water of a tranquil lake, reflecting only the azure of the skies? What images should be drawn upon that spotless canvas? Around which tree must the tendrils of this bind-weed twine? No father has ever put these questions to himself without an inward shudder.

At this moment the good old man of science was riding slowly on his mule along the roads from Hérouville to Ourscamp (the name of the village near which the estate of Forcalier was situated) as if he wished to keep that way unending. The infinite love he bore his

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daughter suggested a bold project to his mind. One only being in all the world could make her happy; that man was Étienne. Assuredly, the angelic son of Jeanne de Saint-Savin and the guileless daughter of Gertrude Marana were twin beings. All other women would frighten and kill the heir of Hérouville; and Gabrielle, so Beauvouloir argued, would perish by contact with any man in whom sentiments and external forms had not the virgin delicacy of those of Étienne. Certainly the poor physician had never dreamed of such a result; chance had brought it forward and seemed to ordain it. But, under the reign of Louis XIII., to dare to lead a Duc d'Hérouville to marry the daughter of a bonesetter!

And yet, from this marriage alone was it likely that the lineage imperiously demanded by the old duke would result? Nature had destined these two rare beings for each other; God had brought them together by a marvellous arrangement of events, while, at the same time, human ideas and laws placed insuperable barriers between them. Though the old man thought he saw in this the finger of God, and although he had forced the duke to pass his word, he was seized with such fear, as his thoughts reverted to the violence of that ungovernable nature, that he returned upon his steps when, on reaching the summit of the hill above Ourscamp, he saw the smoke of his own chimneys among the trees that enclosed his home. Then, changing his mind once more, the thought of the illegitimate relationship decided him; that consideration might have great influence on the mind of his master. Once decided, Beauvouloir had confidence in the chances

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and changes of life; it might be that the duke would die before the marriage; besides, there were many examples of such marriage: a peasant girl in Dauphiné, Françoise Mignot, had lately married the Maréchal de l'Hôpital; the son of the Connétable Anne de Montmorency had married Diane, daughter of Henri II. and a Piedmontese lady named Philippa Duc.

During this mental deliberation in which paternal love measured all probabilities and discussed both the good and the evil chances, striving to foresee the future and weighing its elements, Gabrielle was walking in the garden and gathering flowers for the vases of that illustrious potter, who did for glaze what Benvenuto Cellini did for metal. Gabrielle had put one of these vases, decorated with animals in relief, on a table in the middle of the hall, and was filling it with flowers to enliven her grandmother, and also, perhaps, to give form to her own ideas. The noble vase, of the pottery called Limoges, was filled, arranged, and placed upon the handsome table-cloth, and Gabrielle was saying to her grandmother, "See!" when Beauvouloir entered. The young girl ran into her father's arms. After this first outburst of affection she wanted him to admire her bouquet; but the old man, after glancing at it, cast a long, deep look at his daughter, which made her blush.

"The time has come," he said to himself, understanding the language of those flowers, each of which had doubtless been studied as to form and as to color, and given its true place in the bouquet, where it produced its own magical effect.

Gabrielle remained standing, forgetting the flower

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begun on her tapestry. As he looked at his daughter a tear rolled from Beauvouloir's eyes, furrowed his cheeks which seldom wore a serious aspect, and fell upon his shirt, which, after the fashion of the day, his open doublet exposed to view above his breeches. He threw off his felt hat, adorned with an old red plume, in order to rub his hand over his bald head. Again he looked at his daughter, who, beneath the brown rafters of that leather-hung room, with its ebony furniture and portières of silken damask, and its tall chimney-piece, the whole so softly lighted, was still his very own. The poor father felt the tears in his eyes and hastened to wipe them. A father who loves his daughter longs to keep her always a child; as for him who can without deep pain see her fall under the dominion of another man, he does not rise to worlds superior, he falls to lowest space.

"What ails you, my son?" said his old mother, taking off her spectacles, and seeking the cause of his silence and of the change in his usually joyous manner.

The old physician signed to the old mother to look at his daughter, nodding his head with satisfaction as if to say, "How sweet she is!"

What father would not have felt Beauvouloir's emotion on seeing the young girl as she stood there in the Norman dress of that period? Gabrielle wore the corset pointed before and square behind, which the Italian masters give almost invariably to their saints and their madonnas. This elegant corselet, made of sky-blue velvet, as dainty as that of a dragon-fly, inclosed the bust like a guimpe and compressed it, delicately modelling the outline it seemed to flatten; it moulded the shoul-

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ders, the back, the waist, with the precision of a drawing made by an able draftsman, ending around the neck in an oblong curve, adorned at the edges with a slight embroidery in brown silks, leaving to view as much of the bare throat as was needed to show the beauty of her womanhood, but not enough to awaken desire. A full brown skirt, continuing the lines already drawn by the velvet waist, fell to her feet in narrow flattened pleats. Her figure was so slender that Gabrielle seemed tall; her arms hung pendent with the inertia that some deep thought imparts to the attitude. Thus standing, she presented a living model of those ingenuous works of statuary a taste for which prevailed at that period, — works which obtained admiration for the harmony of their lines, straight without stiffness, and for the firmness of a design which did not exclude vitality. No swallow, brushing the window-panes at dusk, ever conveyed the idea of greater elegance of outline.

Gabrielle's face was thin, but not flat; on her neck and forehead ran bluish threads showing the delicacy of a skin so transparent that the flowing of the blood through her veins seemed visible. This excessive whiteness was faintly tinted with rose upon the cheeks. Held beneath a little coif of sky-blue velvet embroidered with pearls, her hair, of an even tone, flowed like two rivulets of gold from her temples and played in ringlets on her neck, which it did not hide. The glowing color of those silky locks brightened the dazzling whiteness of the neck, and purified still further by its reflections the outlines of the face already so pure. The eyes, which were long and as if pressed between

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their lids, were in harmony with the delicacy of the head and body; their pearl-gray tints were brilliant without vivacity, candid without passion. The line of the nose might have seemed cold, like a steel blade, without two rosy nostrils, the movements of which were out of keeping with the chastity of that dreamy brow, often perplexed, sometimes smiling, but always of an august serenity. An alert little ear attracted the eye, peeping beneath the coif and between two curls, and showing a ruby ear-drop, the color of which stood vigorously out on the milky whiteness of the neck. This was neither Norman beauty, where flesh abounds, nor Southern beauty where passion magnifies matter, nor French beauty, as fugitive as its own expressions, nor the beauty of the North, cold and melancholy as the North itself — it was the deep seraphic beauty of the Catholic Church, supple and rigid, severe but tender.

"Where could one find a prettier duchess?" thought Beauvouloir, contemplating his daughter with delight. As she stood there slightly bending, her neck stretched out to watch the flight of a bird past the windows, he could only compare her to a gazelle pausing to listen for the ripple of the water where she seeks to drink.

"Come and sit here," said Beauvouloir, tapping his knee and making a sign to Gabrielle, which told her he had something to whisper to her.

Gabrielle understood him, and came. She placed herself on his knee with the lightness of a gazelle, and slipped her arm about his neck, ruffling his collar.

"Tell me," he said, "what were you thinking of when you gathered those flowers? You have never before arranged them so charmingly."

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"I was thinking of many things," she answered. "Looking at the flowers made for us, I wondered whom we were made for; who are they who look at us? You are wise, and I can tell you what I think; you know so much you can explain all. I feel a sort of force within me that wants to exercise itself; I struggle against something. When the sky is gray I am half content; I am sad, but I am calm. When the day is fine, and the flowers smell sweet, and I sit on my bench down there among the jasmine and honeysuckles, something rises in me, like waves which beat against my stillness. Ideas come into my mind which shake me, and fly away like those birds before the windows; I cannot hold them. Well, when I have made a bouquet in which the colors blend like tapestry, and the red contrasts with white, and the greens and the browns cross each other, when all seems so abundant, the breeze so playful, the flowers so many that their fragrance mingles and their buds interlace, — well, then I am happy, for I see what is passing in me. At church when the organ plays and the clergy respond, there are two distinct songs speaking to each other, — the human voices and the music. Well, then, too, I am happy; that harmony echoes in my breast. I pray with a pleasure which stirs my blood."

While listening to his daughter, Beauvouloir examined her with sagacious eyes; those eyes seemed almost stupid from the force of his rushing thoughts, as the water of a cascade seems motionless. He raised the veil of flesh which hid the secret springs by which the soul reacts upon the body; he studied the diverse

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symptoms which his long experience had noted in persons committed to his care, and he compared them with those contained in this frail body, the bones of which frightened him by their delicacy, as the milk-white skin alarmed him by its want of substance. He tried to bring the teachings of his science to bear upon the future of that angelic child, and he was dizzy in so doing, as though he stood upon the verge of an abyss; the too vibrant voice, the too slender bosom of the young girl filled him with dread, and he questioned himself after questioning her.

"You suffer here!" he cried at last, driven by a last thought which summed up his whole meditation.

She bent her head gently.

"By God's grace!" said the old man, with a sigh, "I will take you to the Château d'Hérouville, and there you shall take sea-baths to strengthen you."

"Is that true, father? You are not laughing at your little Gabrielle? I have so longed to see the castle, and the men-at-arms, and the captains of monseigneur."

"Yes, my daughter, you shall really go there. Your nurse and Jean shall accompany you."

"Soon?"

"To-morrow," said the old man, hurrying into the garden to hide his agitation from his mother and his child.

"God is my witness," he cried to himself, "that no ambitious thought impels me. My daughter to save, poor little Étienne to make happy, — those are my only motives."

If he thus interrogated himself it was because, in the depths of his consciousness, he felt an inextin-

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guishable satisfaction in knowing that the success of his project would make Gabrielle some day the Duchesse d'Hérouville. There is always a man in a father. He walked about a long time, and when he came in to supper he took delight for the rest of the evening in watching his daughter in the midst of the soft brown poesy with which he had surrounded her; and when, before she went to bed, they all — the grandmother, the nurse, the doctor, and Gabrielle — knelt together to say their evening prayer, he added the words, —

"Let us pray to God to bless my enterprise."

The eyes of the grandmother, who knew his intentions, were moistened with what tears remained to her. Gabrielle's face was flushed with happiness. The father trembled, so much did he fear some catastrophe.

"After all," his mother said to him, "fear not, my son. The duke would never kill his grandchild."

"No," he replied, "but he might compel her to marry some brute of a baron, and that would kill her."

The next day Gabrielle, mounted on an ass, followed by her nurse on foot, her father on his mule, and a valet who led two horses laden with baggage, started for the castle of Hérouville, where the caravan arrived at nightfall. In order to keep this journey secret, Beauvouloir had taken by-roads, starting early in the morning, and had brought provisions to be eaten by the way, in order not to show himself at hostelries. The party arrived, therefore, after dark, without being noticed by the castle retinue, at the little dwelling on the seashore, so long occupied by the hated son, where Bertrand, the only person the doctor had taken into

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his confidence, awaited them. The old retainer helped the nurse and valet to unload the horses and carry in the baggage, and otherwise establish the daughter of Beauvouloir in Étienne's former abode. When Bertrand saw Gabrielle, he was amazed.

"I seem to see madame!" he cried. "She is slim and willowy like her; she has madame's coloring and the same fair hair. The old duke will surely love her."

"God grant it!" said Beauvouloir. "But will he acknowledge his own blood after it has passed through mine?"

"He can't deny it," replied Bertrand. "I often went to fetch him from the door of the Belle Romaine, who lived in the rue Culture-Sainte-Catherine. The Cardinal de Lorraine was compelled to give her up to monseigneur, out of shame at being insulted by the mob when he left her house. Monseigneur, who in those days was still in his twenties, will remember that affair; bold he was, — I can tell it now — he led the insulters!"

"He never thinks of the past," said Beauvouloir. "He knows my wife is dead, but I doubt if he remembers I have a daughter."

"Two old navigators like you and me ought to be able to bring the ship to port," said Bertrand. "After all, suppose the duke does get angry and seize our carcasses; they have served their time."

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VI.

LOVE.

Before starting for Paris, the Duc d'Hérouville had forbidden the castle servants under heavy pains and penalties to go upon the shore where Étienne had passed his life, unless the Duc de Nivron took any of them with him. This order, suggested by Beauvouloir, who had shown the duke the wisdom of leaving Étienne master of his solitude, guaranteed to Gabrielle and her attendants the inviolability of the little domain, outside of which he forbade them to go without his permission.

Étienne had remained during these two days shut up in the old seignorial bedroom under the spell of his tenderest memories. In that bed his mother had slept; her thoughts had been confided to the furnishings of that room; she had used them; her eyes had often wandered among those draperies; how often she had gone to that window to call with a cry, a sign, her poor disowned child, now master of the château. Alone in that room, whither he had last come secretly, brought by Beauvouloir to kiss his dying mother, he fancied that she lived again; he spoke to her, he listened to her, he drank from that spring that never faileth, and from which have flowed so many songs like the *Super flumina Babylonis*.

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The day after Beauvouloir's return he went to see his young master and blamed him gently for shutting himself up in a single room, pointing out to him the danger of leading a prison life in place of his former free life in the open air.

"But this air is vast," replied Étienne. "The spirit of my mother is in it."

The physician prevailed, however, by the gentle influence of affection, in making Étienne promise that he would go out every day, either on the seashore, or in the fields and meadows which were still unknown to him. In spite of this, Étienne, absorbed in his memories, remained yet another day at his window watching the sea, which offered him from that point of view aspects so various that never, as he believed, had he seen it so beautiful. He mingled his contemplations with readings in Petrarch, one of his most favorite authors, — him whose poesy went nearest to the young man's heart through the constancy and the unity of his love. Étienne had not within him the stuff for several passions. He could love but once, and in one way only. If that love, like all that is a unit, were intense, it must also be calm in its expression, sweet and pure like the sonnets of the Italian poet.

At sunset this child of solitude began to sing, in the marvellous voice which had entered suddenly, like a hope, into the dullest of all ears to music, — those of his father. He expressed his melancholy by varying the same air, which he repeated, again and again, like the nightingale. This air, attributed to the late King Henri IV., was not the so-called air of "Gabrielle," but something far superior as art, as melody, as the

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expression of infinite tenderness. The admirers of those ancient tunes will recognize the words, composed by the great king to this air, which were taken, probably, from some folk-song to which his cradle had been rocked among the mountains of Béarn.

"Dawn, approach,
I pray thee ;
It gladdens me to see thee;
The maiden
Whom I love
Is rosy, rosy like thee;
The rose itself,
Dew-laden,
Has not her freshness;.
Ermine has not
Her pureness;
Lilies have not
Her whiteness."

After naïvely revealing the thought of his heart in song, Étienne contemplated the sea, saying to himself: "There is my bride; the only love for me!" Then he sang two other lines of the canzonet, —

"She is fair
Beyond compare," —

repeating it to express the imploring poesy which abounds in the heart of a timid young man, brave only when alone. Dreams were in that undulating song, sung, resung, interrupted, renewed, and hushed at last in a final modulation, the tones of which died away like the lingering vibrations of a bell.

At this moment a voice, which he fancied was that of a siren rising from the sea, a woman's voice, re-

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peated the air he had sung, but with all the hesitations of a person to whom music is revealed for the first time. He recognized the stammering of a heart born into the poesy of harmony. Étienne, to whom long study of his own voice had taught the language of sounds, in which the soul finds resources greater than speech to express its thoughts, could divine the timid amazement that attended these attempts. With what religious and subtile admiration had that unknown being listened to him! The stillness of the atmosphere enabled him to hear every sound, and he quivered at the distant rustle of the folds of a gown. He was amazed, — he, whom all emotions produced by terror sent to the verge of death — to feel within him the healing, balsamic sensation which his mother's coming had formerly brought to him.

"Come, Gabrielle, my child," said the voice of Beauvouloir, "I forbade you to stay upon the sea-shore after sundown; you must come in, my daughter."

"Gabrielle," said Étienne to himself. "Oh! the pretty name!"

Beauvouloir presently came to him, rousing his young master from one of those meditations which resemble dreams. It was night, and the moon was rising.

"Monseigneur," said the physician, "you have not been out to-day, and it is not wise of you."

"And I," replied Étienne, "can *I* go on the sea-shore after sundown?"

The double meaning of this speech, full of the gentle playfulness of a first desire, made the old man smile.

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"You have a daughter, Beauvouloir."

"Yes, monseigneur, — the child of my old age; my darling child. Monseigneur, the duke, your father, charged me so earnestly to watch your precious health that, not being able to go to Forcalier, where she was, I have brought her here, to my great regret. In order to conceal her from all eyes, I have placed her in the house monseigneur used to occupy. She is so delicate I fear everything, even a sudden sentiment or emotion. I have never taught her anything; knowledge would kill her."

"She knows nothing!" cried Étienne, surprised.

"She has all the talents of a good housewife, but she has lived as the plants live. Ignorance, monseigneur, is as sacred a thing as knowledge. Knowledge and ignorance are only two ways of living, for the human creature. Both preserve the soul and envelop it; knowledge is your existence, but ignorance will save my daughter's life. Pearls well-hidden escape the diver, and live happy. I can only compare my Gabrielle to a pearl; her skin has the pearl's translucence, her soul its softness, and until this day Forcalier has been her fostering shell."

"Come with me," said Étienne, throwing on a cloak. "I want to walk on the seashore, the air is so soft."

Beauvouloir and his master walked in silence until they reached a spot where a line of light, coming from between the shutters of the fisherman's house, had furrowed the sea with a golden rivulet.

"I know not how to express," said Étienne, addressing his companion, "the sensations that light,

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cast upon the water, excites in me. I have often watched it streaming from the windows of that room," he added, pointing back to his mother's chamber, "until it was extinguished."

"Delicate as Gabrielle is," said Beauvouloir, gayly, "she can come and walk with us; the night is warm, and the air has no dampness. I will fetch her; but be prudent, monseigneur."

Étienne was too timid to propose to accompany Beauvouloir into the house; besides, he was in that torpid state into which we are plunged by the influx of ideas and sensations which give birth to the dawn of passion. Conscious of more freedom in being alone, he cried out, looking at the sea now gleaming in the moonlight, —

"The Ocean has passed into my soul!"

The sight of the lovely living statuette which was now advancing towards him, silvered by the moon and wrapped in its light, redoubled the palpitations of his heart, but without causing him to suffer.

"My child," said Beauvouloir, "this is monseigneur."

In a moment poor Étienne longed for his father's colossal figure; he would fain have seemed strong, not puny. All the vanities of love and manhood came into his heart like so many arrows, and he remained in gloomy silence, measuring for the first time the extent of his imperfections. Embarrassed by the salutation of the young girl, he returned it awkwardly, and stayed beside Beauvouloir, with whom he talked as they paced along the shore; presently, however, Gabrielle's timid and deprecating countenance emboldened him, and he dared to address her. The incident of the song was

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the result of mere chance. Beauvouloir had intentionally made no preparations; he thought, wisely, that between two beings in whom solitude had left pure hearts, love would arise in all its simplicity. The repetition of the air by Gabrielle was a ready text on which to begin a conversation.

During this promenade Étienne was conscious of that bodily buoyancy which all men have felt at the moment when a first love transports their vital principle into another being. He offered to teach Gabrielle to sing. The poor lad was so glad to show himself to this young girl invested with some slight superiority that he trembled with pleasure when she accepted his offer. At that moment the moonlight fell full upon her, and enabled Étienne to note the points of her resemblance to his mother, the late duchess. Like Jeanne de Saint-Savin, Beauvouloir's daughter was slender and delicate; in her, as in the duchess, sadness and suffering conveyed a mysterious charm. She had that nobility of manner peculiar to souls on whom the ways of the world have had no influence, and in whom all is noble because all is natural. But in Gabrielle's veins there was also the blood of "la belle Romaine," which had flowed there from two generations, giving to this young girl the passionate heart of a courtesan in an absolutely pure soul; hence the enthusiasm that sometimes reddened her cheek, sanctified her brow, made her exhale her soul like a flash of light, and communicated the sparkle of flame to all her motions. Beauvouloir shuddered when he noticed this phenomenon, which we may call in these days the phosphorescence of thought; the old physician of that period regarded it as the precursor of death.

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Hidden beside her father, Gabrielle endeavored to see Étienne at her ease, and her looks expressed as much curiosity as pleasure, as much kindliness as innocent daring. Étienne detected her in stretching her neck around Beauvouloir with the movement of a timid bird looking out of its nest. To her the young man seemed not feeble, but delicate; she found him so like herself that nothing alarmed her in this sovereign lord. Étienne's sickly complexion, his beautiful hands, his languid smile, his hair parted in the middle into two straight bands, ending in curls on the lace of his large flat collar, his noble brow, furrowed with youthful wrinkles, — all these contrasts of luxury and weakness, power and pettiness, pleased her; perhaps they gratified the instinct of maternal protection, which is the germ of love; perhaps, also, they stimulated the need that every woman feels to find distinctive signs in the man she is prompted to love. New ideas, new sensations were rising in each with a force, with an abundance that enlarged their souls; both remained silent and overcome, for sentiments are least demonstrative when most real and deep. All durable love begins by dreamy meditation. It was suitable that these two beings should first see each other in the softer light of the moon, that love and its splendors might not dazzle them too suddenly; it was well that they met by the shores of the Ocean, — vast image of the vastness of their feelings. They parted filled with one another, fearing, each, to have failed to please.

From his window Étienne watched the lights of the house where Gabrielle was. During that hour of hope mingled with fear, the young poet found fresh mean-

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ings in Petrarch's sonnets. He had now seen Laura, a delicate, delightful figure, pure and glowing like a sunray, intelligent as an angel, feeble as a woman. His twenty years of study found their meaning, he understood the mystic marriage of all beauties; he perceived how much of womanhood there was in the poems he adored; in short, he had so long loved unconsciously that his whole past now blended with the emotions of this glorious night. Gabrielle's resemblance to his mother seemed to him an order divinely given. He did not betray his love for the one in loving the other; this new love continued *her* maternity. He contemplated that young girl, asleep in the cottage, with the same feelings his mother had felt for him when he was there. Here, again, was a similitude which bound this present to the past. On the clouds of memory the saddened face of his mother appeared to him; he saw once more her feeble smile, he heard her gentle voice; she bowed her head and wept. The lights in the cottage were extinguished. Étienne sang once more the pretty canzonet, with a new expression, a new meaning. From afar Gabrielle again replied. The young girl, too, was making her first voyage into the charmèd land of amorous ecstasy. That echoed answer filled with joy the young man's heart; the blood flowing in his veins gave him a strength he never yet had felt, love made him powerful. Feeble beings alone know the voluptuous joy of that new creation entering their life. The poor, the suffering, the ill-used, have joys ineffable; small things to them are worlds. Étienne was bound by many a tie to the dwellers in the City of Sorrows.

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His recent accession to grandeur had caused him terror only; love now shed within him the balm that created strength; he loved Love.

The next day Étienne rose early to hasten to his old house, where Gabrielle, stirred by curiosity and an impatience she did not acknowledge to herself, had already curled her hair and put on her prettiest costume. Both were full of the eager desire to see each other again, — mutually fearing the results of the interview. As for Étienne, he had chosen his finest lace, his best-embroidered mantle, his violet-velvet breeches; in short, those handsome habiliments which we connect in all memoirs of the time with the pallid face of Louis XIII., a face oppressed with pain in the midst of grandeur, like that of Étienne. Clothes were certainly not the only point of resemblance between the king and the subject. Many other sensibilities were in Étienne as in Louis XIII.,— chastity, melancholy, vague but real sufferings, chivalrous timidities, the fear of not being able to express a feeling in all its purity, the dread of too quickly approaching happiness, which all great souls desire to delay, the sense of the burden of power, that tendency to obedience which is found in natures indifferent to material interests, but full of love for what a noble religious genius has called the *astral.*

Though wholly inexpert in the ways of the world, Gabrielle was conscious that the daughter of a doctor, the humble inhabitant of Forcalier, was cast at too great a distance from Monseigneur Étienne, Duc de Nivron and heir of the house of Hérouville, to allow them to be equal; she had as yet no conception of the ennobling of love. The naïve creature thought with no

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ambition of a place where every other girl would have longed to seat herself; she saw the obstacles only. Loving, without as yet knowing what it was to love, she only felt herself distant from her pleasure, and longed to get nearer to it, as a child longs for the golden grapes hanging high above its head. To a girl whose emotions were stirred at the sight of a flower, and who had unconsciously foreseen love in the chants of the liturgy, how sweet and how strong must have been the feelings inspired in her breast the previous night by the sight of the young seigneur's feebleness, which seemed to reassure her own. But during the night Étienne had been magnified to her mind; she had made him a hope, a power; she had placed him so high that now she despaired of ever reaching him.

"Will you permit me to sometimes enter your domain?" asked the duke, lowering his eyes.

Seeing Étienne so timid, so humble, — for he, on his part, had magnified Beauvouloir's daughter, — Gabrielle was embarrassed with the sceptre he placed in her hands; and yet she was profoundly touched and flattered by such submission. Women alone know what seduction the respect of their master and lover has for them. Nevertheless, she feared to deceive herself, and, curious like the first woman, she wanted to know all.

"I thought you promised yesterday to teach me music," she answered, hoping that music might be made a pretext for their meetings.

If the poor child had known what Étienne's life really was, she would have spared him that doubt. To him his word was the echo of his mind, and Gabrielle's little speech caused him infinite pain. He

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had come with his heart full, fearing some cloud upon his daylight, and he met a doubt. His joy was extinguished; back into his desert he plunged, no longer finding there the flowers with which he had embellished it. With that prescience of sorrows which characterizes the angel charged to soften them — who is, no doubt, the Charity of heaven — Gabrielle instantly divined the pain she had caused. She was so vividly aware of her fault that she prayed for the power of God to lay bare her soul to Étienne, for she knew the cruel pang a reproach or a stern look was capable of causing; and she artlessly betrayed to him these clouds as they rose in her soul, — the golden swathings of her dawning love. One tear which escaped her eyes turned Étienne's pain to pleasure, and he inwardly accused himself of tyranny. It was fortunate for both that in the very beginning of their love they should thus come to know the diapason of their hearts; they avoided henceforth a thousand shocks which might have wounded them.

Étienne, impatient to intrench himself behind an occupation, led Gabrielle to a table before the little window at which he himself had suffered so long, and where he was henceforth to admire a flower more dainty than all he had hitherto studied. Then he opened a book over which they bent their heads till their hair touched and mingled.

These two beings, so strong in heart, so weak in body, but embellished by all the graces of suffering, were a touching sight. Gabrielle was ignorant of coquetry; a look was given the instant it was asked for, the soft rays from the eyes of each never ceasing to

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mingle, unless from modesty. The young girl took the joy of telling Étienne what pleasure his voice gave her as she listened to his song; she forgot the meaning of his words when he explained to her the position of the notes or their value; she listened to *him*, leaving melody for the instrument, the idea for the form; ingenuous flattery! the first that true love meets. Gabrielle thought Étienne handsome; she would have liked to stroke the velvet of his mantle, to touch the lace of his broad collar. As for Étienne he was transformed under the creative glance of those earnest eyes; they infused into his being a fruitful sap, which sparkled in his eyes, shone on his brow, remade him inwardly, so that he did not suffer from this new play of his faculties; on the contrary they were strengthened by it. Happiness is the mother's milk of a new life.

As nothing came to distract them from each other, they stayed together not only this day but all days; for they belonged to one another from the first hour, passing the sceptre from one to the other and playing with themselves as children play with life. Sitting, happy and content, upon the golden sands, they told each other their past, painful for him, but rich in dreams; dreamy for her, but full of painful pleasure.

"I never had a mother," said Gabrielle, "but my father has been good as God himself."

"I never had a father," said the hated son, "but my mother was all of heaven to me."

Étienne related his youth, his love for his mother, his taste for flowers. Gabrielle exclaimed at his last words. Questioned why, she blushed and avoided answering; then when a shadow passed across that brow

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which death seemed to graze with its pinion, across that visible soul where the young man's slightest emotions showed, she answered: —

"Because I too love flowers."

To believe ourselves linked far back in the past by community of tastes, is not that a declaration of love such as virgins know how to give? Love desires to seem old; it is a coquetry of youth.

Étienne brought flowers on the morrow, ordering his people to find rare ones, as his mother had done in earlier days for him. Who knows the depths to which the roots of a feeling reach in the soul of a solitary being thus returning to the traditions of mother-love in order to bestow upon a woman the same caressing devotion with which his mother had charmed his life? To him, what grandeur in these nothings wherein were blended his only two affections. Flowers and music thus became the language of their love. Gabrielle replied to Étienne's gifts by nosegays of her own, — nosegays which told the wise old doctor that his ignorant daughter already knew enough. The material ignorance of these two lovers was like a dark background on which the faintest lines of their all-spiritual intercourse were traced with exquisite delicacy, like the red, pure outlines of Etruscan figures. Their slightest words brought a flood of ideas, because each was the fruit of their long meditations. Incapable of boldly looking forward, each beginning seemed to them an end. Though absolutely free, they were imprisoned in their own simplicity, which would have been disheartening had either given a meaning to their confused desires. They were poets and poem both

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Music, the most sensual of arts for loving souls, was the interpreter of their ideas; they took delight in repeating the same harmony, letting their passion flow through those fine sheets of sound in which their souls could vibrate without obstacle.

Many loves proceed through opposition; through quarrels and reconciliations, the vulgar struggle of mind and matter. But the first wing-beat of true love sends it far beyond such struggles. Where all is of the same essence, two natures are no longer to be distinguished; like genius in its highest expression, such love can sustain itself in the brightest light; it grows beneath the light, it needs no shade to bring it into relief. Gabrielle, because she was a woman, Étienne, because he had suffered much and meditated much, passed quickly through the regions occupied by common passions and went beyond it. Like all enfeebled natures, they were quickly penetrated by Faith, by that celestial glow which doubles strength by doubling the soul. For them their sun was always at its meridian. Soon they had that divine belief in themselves which allows of neither jealousy nor torment; abnegation was ever ready, admiration constant.

Under these conditions, love could have no pain. Equal in their feebleness, strong in their union, if the noble had some superiority of knowledge and some conventional grandeur, the daughter of the physician eclipsed all that by her beauty, by the loftiness of her sentiments, by the delicacy she gave to their enjoyments. Thus these two white doves flew with one wing beneath their pure blue heaven; Étienne loved, he was loved, the present was serene, the future cloud-

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less; he was sovereign lord; the castle was his, the sea belonged to both of them; no vexing thought troubled the harmonious concert of their canticle; virginity of mind and senses enlarged for them the world, their thoughts rose in their minds without effort; desire, the satisfactions of which are doomed to blast so much, desire, that evil of terrestrial love, had not as yet attacked them. Like two zephyrs swaying on the same willow-branch, they needed nothing more than the joy of looking at each other in the mirror of the limpid waters; immensity sufficed them; they admired their Ocean, without one thought of gliding on it in the white-winged bark with ropes of flowers, sailed by Hope.

Love has its moment when it suffices to itself, when it is happy in merely being. During this springtime, when all is budding, the lover sometimes hides from the beloved woman, in order to enjoy her more, to see her better; but Étienne and Gabrielle plunged together into all the delights of that infantine period. Sometimes they were two sisters in the grace of their confidences, sometimes two brothers in the boldness of their questionings. Usually love demands a slave and a god, but these two realized the dream of Plato, — they were but one being deified. They protected each other. Caresses came slowly, one by one, but chaste as the merry play — so graceful, so coquettish — of young animals. The sentiment which induced them to express their souls in song led them to love by the manifold transformations of the same happiness. Their joys caused them neither wakefulness nor delirium. It was the infancy of pleasure developing within them,

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unaware of the beautiful red flowers which were to crown its shoots. They gave themselves to each other, ignorant of all danger; they cast their whole being into a word, into a look, into a kiss, into the long, long pressure of their clasping hands. They praised each other's beauties ingenuously, spending treasures of language on these secret idyls, inventing soft exaggerations and more diminutives than the ancient muse of Tibullus, or the poesies of Italy. On their lips and in their hearts love flowed ever, like the liquid fringes of the sea upon the sands of the shore, — all alike, all dissimilar. Joyous, eternal fidelity!

If we must count by days, the time thus spent was five months only; if we may count by innumerable sensations, thoughts, dreams, glances, opening flowers, realized hopes, unceasing joys, speeches interrupted, renewed, abandoned, frolic laughter, bare feet dabbling in the sea, hunts, childlike, for shells, kisses, surprises, clasping hands, — call it a lifetime; death will justify the word. There are existences that are ever gloomy, lived under ashen skies; but suppose a glorious day, when the sun of heaven glows in the azure air, — such was the May of their love, during which Étienne had suspended all his griefs, — griefs which had passed into the heart of Gabrielle, who, in turn, had fastened all her joys to come on those of her lord. Étienne had had but one sorrow in his life, — the death of his mother; he was to have but one love — Gabrielle.

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VII.

THE CRUSHED PEARL.

THE coarse rivalry of an ambitious man hastened the destruction of this honeyed life. The Duc d'Hérouville, an old warrior in wiles and policy, had no sooner passed his word to his physician than he was conscious of the voice of distrust. The Baron d'Artagnon, lieutenant of his company of men-at-arms, possessed his utmost confidence. The baron was a man after the duke's own heart, — a species of butcher, built for strength, tall, virile in face, cold and harsh, brave in the service of the throne, rude in his manners, with an iron will in action, but supple in manœuvres, withal an ambitious noble, possessing the honor of a soldier and the wiles of a politician. He had the hand his face demanded, — large and hairy like that of a guerilla; his manners were brusque, his speech concise. The duke, in departing, gave to this man the duty of watching and reporting to him the conduct of Beauvouloir toward the new heir-presumptive.

In spite of the secrecy which surrounded Gabrielle, it was difficult to long deceive the commander of a company. He heard the singing of two voices; he saw the lights at night in the dwelling on the seashore; he guessed that Étienne's orders, repeated constantly, for flowers concerned a woman; he discovered

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Gabrielle's nurse making her way on foot to Forcalier, carrying linen or clothes, and bringing back with her the work-frame and other articles needed by a young lady. The spy then watched the cottage, saw the physician's daughter, and fell in love with her. Beauvouloir he knew was rich. The duke would be furious at the man's audacity. On those foundations the Baron d'Artagnon erected the edifice of his fortunes. The duke, on learning that his son was falling in love, would, of course, instantly endeavor to detach him from the girl; what better way than to force her into a marriage with a noble like himself, giving his son to the daughter of some great house, the heiress of large estates. The baron himself had no property. The scheme was excellent, and might have succeeded with other natures than those of Étienne and Gabrielle; with them failure was certain.

During his stay in Paris the duke had avenged the death of Maximilien by killing his son's adversary, and he had planned for Étienne an alliance with the heiress of a branch of the house of Grandlieu, — a tall and disdainful beauty, who was flattered by the prospect of some day bearing the title of Duchesse d'Hérouville. The duke expected to oblige his son to marry her. On learning from d'Artagnon that Étienne was in love with the daughter of a miserable physician, he was only the more determined to carry out the marriage. What could such a man comprehend of love, — he who had let his own wife die beside him without understanding a single sigh of her heart? Never, perhaps, in his life had he felt such violent anger as when the last despatch of the baron told him with what

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rapidity Beauvouloir's plans were advancing, — the baron attributing them wholly to the bonesetter's ambition. The duke ordered out his equipages and started for Rouen, bringing with him the Comtesse de Grandlieu, her sister the Marquise de Noirmoutier, and Mademoiselle de Grandlieu, under pretext of showing them the province of Normandy.

A few days before his arrival a rumor was spread about the country — by what means no one seemed to know — of the passion of the young Duc de Nivron for Gabrielle Beauvouloir. People in Rouen spoke of it to the Duc d'Hérouville in the midst of a banquet given to celebrate his return to the province; for the guests were glad to deliver a blow to the despot of Normandy. This announcement excited the anger of the governor to the highest pitch. He wrote to the baron to keep his coming to Hérouville a close secret, giving him certain orders to avert what he considered to be an evil.

It was under these circumstances that Étienne and Gabrielle unrolled their thread through the labyrinth of love, where both, not seeking to leave it, thought to dwell. One day they had remained from morn to evening near the window where so many events had taken place. The hours, filled at first with gentle talk, had ended in meditative silence. They began to feel within them the wish for complete possession; and presently they reached the point of confiding to each other their confused ideas, the reflections of two beautiful, pure souls. During these still, serene hours, Étienne's eyes would sometimes fill with tears as he held the hand of Gabrielle to his lips. Like his mother,

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but at this moment happier in his love than she had been in hers, the hated son looked down upon the sea, at that hour golden on the shore, black on the horizon, and slashed here and there with those silvery caps which betoken a coming storm. Gabrielle, conforming to her friend's action, looked at the sight and was silent. A single look, one of those by which two souls support each other, sufficed to communicate their thoughts. Each loved with that love so divinely like unto itself at every instant of its eternity that it is not conscious of devotion or sacrifice or exaction, it fears neither deceptions nor delay. But Étienne and Gabrielle were in absolute ignorance of satisfactions, a desire for which was stirring in their souls.

When the first faint tints of twilight drew a veil athwart the sea, and the hush was interrupted only by the soughing of the flux and reflux on the shore, Étienne rose; Gabrielle followed his motion with a vague fear, for he had dropped her hand. He took her in one of his arms, pressing her to him with a movement of tender cohesion, and she, comprehending his desire, made him feel the weight of her body enough to give him the certainty that she was all his, but not enough to be a burden on him. The lover laid his head heavily on the shoulder of his friend, his lips touched the heaving bosom, his hair flowed over the white shoulders and caressed her throat. The girl, ingenuously loving, bent her head aside to give more place for his head, passing her arm about his neck to gain support. Thus they remained till nightfall without uttering a word. The crickets sang in their holes, and the lovers listened to that music as if to employ

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their senses on one sense only. Certainly they could only in that hour be compared to angels who, with their feet on earth, await the moment to take flight to heaven. They had fulfilled the noble dream of Plato's mystic genius, the dream of all who seek a meaning in humanity; they formed but one soul, they were, indeed, that mysterious Pearl destined to adorn the brow of a star as yet unknown, but the hope of all!

"Will you take me home?" said Gabrielle, the first to break the exquisite silence.

"Why should we part?" replied Étienne.

"We ought to be together always," she said.

"Stay with me."

"Yes."

The heavy step of Beauvouloir sounded in the adjoining room. The doctor had seen these children at the window locked in each other's arms, but he found them separated. The purest love demands its mystery.

"This is not right, my child," he said to Gabrielle, "to stay so late, and have no lights."

"Why wrong?" she said; "you know we love each other, and he is master of the castle."

"My children," said Beauvouloir, "if you love each other, your happiness requires that you should marry and pass your lives together; but your marriage depends on the will of monseigneur the duke —"

"My father has promised to gratify all my wishes," cried Étienne eagerly, interrupting Beauvouloir.

"Write to him, monseigneur," replied the doctor, and give me your letter that I may enclose it with one which I, myself, have just written. Bertrand is to

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start at once to put these despatches into monseigneur's own hand. I have learned to-night that he is now in Rouen; he has brought the heiress of the house of Grandlieu with him, not, as I think, solely for himself. If I listened to my own presentiments, I should take Gabrielle away from here this very night."

"Separate us?" cried Étienne, half fainting with distress and leaning on his love.

"Father!"

"Gabrielle," said the physician, holding out to her a smelling-bottle which he took from a table signing to her to make Étienne inhale its contents, — "Gabrielle, my knowledge of science tells me that Nature destined you for each other. I meant to prepare monseigneur the duke for a marriage which will certainly offend his ideas, but the devil has already prejudiced him against it. Étienne is Duc de Nivron, and you, my child, are the daughter of a poor doctor."

"My father swore to contradict me in nothing," said Étienne, calmly.

"He swore to me also to consent to all I might do in finding you a wife," replied the doctor; "but suppose that he does not keep his promises?"

Étienne sat down, as if overcome.

"The sea was dark to-night," he said, after a moment's silence.

"If you could ride a horse, monseigneur," said Beauvouloir, "I should tell you to fly with Gabrielle this very evening. I know you both, and I know that any other marriage would be fatal to you. The duke would certainly fling me into a dungeon and leave me there for the rest of my days when he heard of your

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flight; and I should die joyfully if my death secured your happiness. But alas! to mount a horse would risk your life and that of Gabrielle. We must face your father's anger here."

"Here!" repeated Étienne.

"We have been betrayed by some one in the château who has stirred your father's wrath against us," continued Beauvouloir.

"Let us throw ourselves together into the sea," said Étienne to Gabrielle, leaning down to the ear of the young girl who was kneeling beside him.

She bowed her head, smiling. Beauvouloir divined all.

"Monseigneur," he said, "your mind and your knowledge can make you eloquent, and the force of your love may be irresistible. Declare it to monseigneur the duke; you will thus confirm my letter. All is not lost, I think. I love my daughter as well as you love her, and I shall defend her."

Étienne shook his head.

"The sea was very dark to-night," he repeated.

"It was like a sheet of gold at our feet," said Gabrielle in a voice of melody.

Étienne ordered lights, and sat down at a table to write to his father. On one side of him knelt Gabrielle, silent, watching the words he wrote, but not reading them; she read all on Étienne's forehead. On his other side stood old Beauvouloir, whose jovial countenance was deeply sad, — sad as that gloomy chamber where Étienne's mother died. A secret voice cried to the doctor, "The fate of his mother awaits him!"

When the letter was written, Étienne held it out to

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the old man, who hastened to give it to Bertrand. The old retainer's horse was waiting in the courtyard, saddled; the man himself was ready. He started, and met the duke twelve miles from Hérouville.

"Come with me to the gate of the courtyard," said Gabrielle to her friend when they were alone.

The pair passed through the cardinal's library, and went down through the tower, in which was a door, the key of which Étienne had given to Gabrielle. Stupefied by the dread of coming evil, the poor youth left in the tower the torch he had brought to light the steps of his beloved, and continued with her toward the cottage. A few steps from the little garden, which formed a sort of flowery courtyard to the humble habitation, the lovers stopped. Emboldened by the vague alarm which oppressed them, they gave each other, in the shades of night, in the silence, that first kiss in which the senses and the soul unite, and cause a revealing joy. Étienne comprehended love in its dual expression, and Gabrielle fled lest she should be drawn by that love — whither she knew not.

At the moment when the Duc de Nivron reascended the staircase in the castle, after closing the door of the tower, a cry of terror, uttered by Gabrielle, echoed in his ears with the sharpness of a flash of lightning which burns the eyes. Étienne ran through the apartments of the château, down the grand staircase, and along the beach towards Gabrielle's house, where he saw lights.

When Gabrielle, quitting her lover, had entered the little garden, she saw, by the gleam of a torch which lighted her nurse's spinning-wheel, the figure of a man

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sitting in the chair of that excellent woman. At the sound of her steps the man arose and came toward her; this had frightened her, and she gave the cry. The presence and aspect of the Baron d'Artagnon amply justified the fear thus inspired in the young girl's breast.

"Are you the daughter of Beauvouloir, monseigneur's physician?" asked the baron when Gabrielle's first alarm had subsided.

"Yes, monsieur."

"I have matters of the utmost importance to confide to you. I am the Baron d'Artagnon, lieutenant of the company of men-at-arms commanded by Monseigneur the Duc d'Hérouville."

Gabrielle, under the circumstances in which she and her lover stood, was struck by these words, and by the frank tone with which the soldier said them.

"Your nurse is there; she may overhear us. Come this way," said the baron.

He left the garden, and Gabrielle followed him to the beach behind the house.

"Fear nothing!" said the baron.

That speech would have frightened any one less ignorant than Gabrielle; but a simple young girl who loves never thinks herself in peril.

"Dear child," said the baron, endeavoring to give a honeyed tone to his voice, "you and your father are on the verge of an abyss into which you will fall to-morrow. I cannot see your danger without warning you. Monseigneur is furious against your father and against you; he suspects you of having seduced his son, and he would rather see him dead than see him marry you; so much for his son. As for your father,

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this is the decision monseigneur has made about him. Nine years ago your father was implicated in a criminal affair. The matter related to the secretion of a child of rank at the time of its birth which he attended. Monseigneur, knowing that your father was innocent, guaranteed him from prosecution by the parliament; but now he intends to have him arrested and delivered up to justice to be tried for the crime. Your father will be broken on the wheel; though perhaps, in view of some services he has done to his master, he may obtain the favor of being hanged. I do not know what course monseigneur has decided on for you; but I do know that you can save Monseigneur de Nivron from his father's anger, and your father from the horrible death which awaits him, and also save yourself."

"What must I do?" said Gabrielle.

"Throw yourself at monseigneur's feet, and tell him that his son loves you against your will, and say that you do not love him. In proof of this, offer to marry any man whom the duke himself may select as your husband. He is generous; he will dower you handsomely."

"I can do all except deny my love."

"But if that alone can save your father, yourself, and Monseigneur de Nivron?"

"Étienne," she replied, "would die of it, and so should I."

"Monseigneur de Nivron will be unhappy at losing you, but he will live for the honor of his house; you will resign yourself to be the wife of a baron only, instead of being a duchess, and your father will live out his days," said the practical man.

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At this moment Étienne reached the house. He did not see Gabrielle, and he uttered a piercing cry.

"He is here!" cried the young girl; "let me go now and comfort him."

"I shall come for your answer to-morrow," said the baron.

"I will consult my father," she replied.

"You will not see him again. I have received orders to arrest him and send him in chains, under escort, to Rouen," said d'Artagnon, leaving Gabrielle dumb with terror.

The young girl sprang to the house, and found Étienne horrified by the silence of the nurse in answer to his question, "Where is she?"

"I am here!" cried the young girl, whose voice was icy, her step heavy, her color gone.

"What has happened?" he said. "I heard you cry."

"Yes, I hurt my foot against —"

"No, love," replied Étienne, interrupting her. "I heard the steps of a man."

"Étienne, we must have offended God; let us kneel down and pray. I will tell you afterwards."

Étienne and Gabrielle knelt down at the prie-dieu, and the nurse recited her rosary.

"O God!" prayed the girl, with a fervor which carried her beyond terrestrial space, "if we have not sinned against thy divine commandments, if we have not offended the Church, nor yet the king, we, who are one and the same being, in whom love shines with the light that thou hast given to the pearl of the sea, be merciful unto us, and let us not be parted either in this world or in that which is to come."

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"Mother!" added Étienne, "who art in heaven, obtain from the Virgin that if we cannot — Gabrielle and I — be happy here below we may at least die together, and without suffering. Call us, and we will go to thee."

Then, having recited their evening prayers, Gabrielle related her interview with Baron d'Artagnon.

"Gabrielle," said the young man, gathering strength from his despair, "I shall know how to resist my father."

He kissed her on the forehead, but not again upon the lips. Then he returned to the castle, resolved to face the terrible man who had weighed so fearfully on his life. He did not know that Gabrielle's house would be surrounded and guarded by soldiers the moment that he quitted it.

The next day he was struck down with grief when, on going to see her, he found her a prisoner. But Gabrielle sent her nurse to tell him she would die sooner than be false to him; and, moreover, that she knew a way to deceive the guards, and would soon take refuge in the cardinal's library, where no one would suspect her presence, though she did not as yet know when she could accomplish it. Étienne on that returned to his room, where all the forces of his heart were spent in the dreadful suspense of waiting.

At three o'clock on the afternoon of that day the equipages of the duke and suite entered the courtyard of the castle. Madame la Comtesse de Grandlieu, leaning on the arm of her daughter, the duke and Marquise de Noirmoutier mounted the grand staircase in silence, for the stern brow of the master had awed the servants.

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Though Baron d'Artagnon now knew that Gabrielle had evaded his guards, he assured the duke she was a prisoner, for he trembled lest his own private scheme should fail if the duke were angered by this flight. Those two terrible faces — his and the duke's — wore a fierce expression that was ill-disguised by an air of gallantry imposed by the occasion. The duke had already sent to his son, ordering him to be present in the salon. When the company entered it, d'Artagnon saw by the downcast look on Étienne's face that as yet he did not know of Gabrielle's escape.

"This is my son," said the old duke, taking Étienne by the hand and presenting him to the ladies.

Étienne bowed without uttering a word. The countess and Mademoiselle de Grandlieu exchanged a look which the old man intercepted.

"Your daughter will be ill-matched — is that your thought?" he said in a low voice.

"I think quite the contrary, my dear duke," replied the mother, smiling.

The Marquise de Noirmoutier, who accompanied her sister, laughed significantly. That laugh stabbed Étienne to the heart; already the sight of the tall young lady had terrified him.

"Well, Monsieur le duc," said the duke in a low voice and assuming a lively air, "have I not found you a handsome wife? What do you say to that slip of a girl, my cherub?"

The old duke never doubted his son's obedience; Étienne, to him, was the son of his mother, of the same dough, docile to his kneading.

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"Let him have a child and die," thought the old man; "little I care."

"Father," said the young man, in a gentle voice, "I do not understand you."

"Come into your own room, I have a few words to say to you," replied the duke, leading the way into the state bedroom.

Étienne followed his father. The three ladies, stirred with a curiosity that was shared by Baron d'Artagnon, walked about the great salon in a manner to group themselves finally near the door of the bedroom, which the duke had left partially open.

"Dear Benjamin," said the duke, softening his voice, "I have selected that tall and handsome young lady as your wife; she is heiress to the estates of the younger branch of the house of Grandlieu, a fine old family of Bretagne. Therefore make yourself agreeable; remember all the love-making you have read of in your books, and learn to make pretty speeches."

"Father, is it not the first duty of a nobleman to keep his word?"

"Yes."

"Well, then, on the day when I forgave you the death of my mother, dying here through her marriage with you, did you not promise me never to thwart my wishes? 'I will obey you as the family god,' were the words you said to me. I ask nothing of you, I simply demand my freedom in a matter which concerns my life and myself only, — namely, my marriage."

"I understood," replied the old man, all the blood in his body rushing into his face, "that you would not oppose the continuation of our noble race."

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"You made no condition," said Étienne. "I do not know what love has to do with race; but this I know, I love the daughter of your old friend Beauvouloir, and the granddaughter of your friend La Belle Romaine."

"She is dead," replied the old colossus, with an air both savage and jeering, which told only too plainly his intention of making away with her.

A moment of deep silence followed.

The duke saw, through the half-opened door, the three ladies and d'Artagnon. At that crucial moment Étienne, whose sense of hearing was acute, heard in the cardinal's library poor Gabrielle's voice, singing, to let her lover know she was there, —

> "Ermine hath not
> Her pureness;
> The lily not her whiteness."

The hated son, whom his father's horrible speech had flung into a gulf of death, returned to the surface of life at the sound of that voice. Though the emotion of terror thus rapidly cast off had already in that instant, broken his heart, he gathered up his strength, looked his father in the face for the first time in his life, gave scorn for scorn, and said, in tones of hatred: —

"A nobleman ought not to lie."

Then with one bound he sprang to the door of the library and cried: —

"Gabrielle!"

Suddenly the gentle creature appeared among the shadows, like the lily among its leaves, trembling

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before those mocking women thus informed of Étienne's love. As the clouds that bear the thunder project upon the heavens, so the old duke, reaching a degree of anger that defies description, stood out upon the brilliant background produced by the rich clothing of those courtly dames. Between the destruction of his son and a mésalliance, every other father would have hesitated, but in this uncontrollable old man ferocity was the power which had so far solved the difficulties of life for him; he drew his sword in all cases, as the only remedy that he knew for the gordian knots of life. Under present circumstances, when the convulsion of his ideas had reached its height, the nature of the man came uppermost. Twice detected in flagrant falsehood by the being he abhorred, the son he cursed, cursing him more than ever in this supreme moment when that son's despised, and to him most despicable, weakness triumphed over his own omnipotence, infallible till then, the father and the man ceased to exist, the tiger issued from its lair. Casting at the angels before him — the sweetest pair that ever set their feet on earth — a murderous look of hatred, —

"Die, then, both of you!" he cried. "You, vile abortion, the proof of my shame — and you," he said to Gabrielle, "miserable strumpet with the viper tongue, who has poisoned my house!"

These words struck home to the hearts of the two children the terror that already surcharged them. At the moment when Étienne saw the huge hand of his father raising a weapon upon Gabrielle he died, and Gabrielle fell dead in striving to retain him.

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The old man left them, and closed the door violently, saying to Mademoiselle de Grandlieu : —

" I will marry you myself ! "

" You are young and gallant enough to have a fine new lineage," whispered the countess in the ear of the old man, who had served under seven kings of France.

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MAÎTRE CORNÉLIUS.

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MAÎTRE CORNÉLIUS.

To Monsieur le Comte Georges Mniszech:

Some envious being may think on seeing this page illumined by one of the most illustrious of Sarmatian names, that I am striving, as the goldsmiths do, to enhance a modern work with an ancient jewel, — a fancy of the fashions of the day, — but you and a few others, dear count, will know that I am only seeking to pay my debt to Talent, Memory, and Friendship.

I.

A CHURCH SCENE OF THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY.

In 1479, on All Saints' day, the moment at which this history begins, vespers were ending in the cathedral of Tours. The archbishop Hélie de Bourdeilles was rising from his seat to give the benediction himself to the faithful. The sermon had been long; darkness had fallen during the service, and in certain parts of the noble church (the towers of which were not yet finished) the deepest obscurity prevailed. Nevertheless a goodly number of tapers were burning in honor of the saints on the triangular candle-trays destined to receive such pious offerings, the merit and significa-

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tion of which have never been sufficiently explained. The lights on each altar and all the candelabra in the choir were burning. Irregularly shed among a forest of columns and arcades which supported the three naves of the cathedral, the gleam of these masses of candles barely lighted the immense building, because the strong shadows of the columns, projected among the galleries, produced fantastic forms which increased the darkness that already wrapped in gloom the arches, the vaulted ceilings, and the lateral chapels, always sombre, even at mid-day.

The crowd presented effects that were no less picturesque. Certain figures were so vaguely defined in the *chiaroscuro* that they seemed like phantoms; whereas others, standing in a full gleam of the scattered light, attracted attention like the principal heads in a picture. Some statues seemed animated, some men seemed petrified. Here and there eyes shone in the flutings of the columns, the floor reflected looks, the marbles spoke, the vaults re-echoed sighs, the edifice itself seemed endowed with life.

The existence of Peoples has no more solemn scenes, no moments more majestic. To mankind in the mass, movement is needed to make it poetical; but in these hours of religious thought, when human riches unite themselves with celestial grandeur, incredible sublimities are felt in the silence; there is fear in the bended knees, hope in the clasping hands. The concert of feelings in which all souls are rising heavenward produces an inexplicable phenomenon of spirituality. The mystical exaltation of the faithful reacts upon each of them; the feebler are no doubt borne upward by the

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waves of this ocean of faith and love. Prayer, a power electrical, draws our nature above itself. This involuntary union of all wills, equally prostrate on the earth, equally risen into heaven, contains, no doubt, the secret of the magic influence wielded by the chants of the priests, the harmonies of the organ, the perfumes and the pomps of the altar, the voices of the crowd and its silent contemplations. Consequently, we need not be surprised to see in the middle-ages so many tender passions begun in churches after long ecstasies, — passions ending often in little sanctity, and for which women, as usual, were the ones to do penance. Religious sentiment certainly had, in those days, an affinity with love; it was either the motive or the end of it. Love was still a religion, with its fine fanaticism, its naïve superstitions, its sublime devotions, which sympathized with those of Christianity.

The manners of that period will also serve to explain this alliance between religion and love. In the first place society had no meeting-place except before the altar. Lords and vassals, men and women were equals nowhere else. There alone could lovers see each other and communicate. The festivals of the Church were the theatre of former times; the soul of woman was more keenly stirred in a cathedral than it is at a ball or the opera in our day; and do not strong emotions invariably bring women back to love? By dint of mingling with life and grasping it in all its acts and interests, religion had made itself a sharer of all virtues, the accomplice of all vices. Religion had passed into science, into politics, into eloquence, into crimes, into the flesh of

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the sick man and the poor man; it mounted thrones; it was everywhere. These semi-learned observations will serve, perhaps, to vindicate the truth of this study, certain details of which may frighten the perfected morals of our age, which are, as everybody knows, a trifle straitlaced.

At the moment when the chanting ceased and the last notes of the organ, mingling with the vibrations of the loud "A-men" as it issued from the strong chests of the intoning clergy, sent a murmuring echo through the distant arches, and the hushed assembly were awaiting the beneficent words of the archbishop, a burgher, impatient to get home, or fearing for his purse in the tumult of the crowd when the worshippers dispersed, slipped quietly away, at the risk of being called a bad Catholic. On which, a nobleman, leaning against one of the enormous columns that surround the choir, hastened to take possession of the seat abandoned by the worthy Tourainean. Having done so, he quickly hid his face among the plumes of his tall gray cap, kneeling upon the chair with an air of contrition that even an inquisitor would have trusted.

Observing the new-comer attentively, his immediate neighbors seemed to recognize him; after which they returned to their prayers with a certain gesture by which they all expressed the same thought, — a caustic, jeering thought, a silent slander. Two old women shook their heads, and gave each other a glance that seemed to dive into futurity.

The chair into which the young man had slipped was close to a chapel placed between two columns and closed by an iron railing. It was customary for the

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chapter to lease at a handsome price to seignorial families, and even to rich burghers, the right to be present at the services, themselves and their servants exclusively, in the various lateral chapels of the long side-aisles of the cathedral. This simony is in practice to the present day. A woman had her chapel as she now has her opera-box. The families who hired these privileged places were required to decorate the altar of the chapel thus conceded to them, and each made it their pride to adorn their own sumptuously, — a vanity which the Church did not rebuke. In this particular chapel a lady was kneeling close to the railing on a handsome rug of red velvet with gold tassels, precisely opposite to the seat vacated by the burgher. A silver-gilt lamp, hanging from the vaulted ceiling of the chapel before an altar magnificently decorated, cast its pale light upon a prayer-book held by the lady. The book trembled violently in her hand when the young man approached her.

"A-men!"

To that response, sung in a sweet low voice which was painfully agitated, though happily lost in the general clamor, she added rapidly in a whisper: —

"You will ruin me."

The words were said in a tone of innocence which a man of any delicacy ought to have obeyed; they went to the heart and pierced it. But the stranger, carried away, no doubt, by one of those paroxysms of passion which stifle conscience, remained in his chair and raised his head slightly that he might look into the chapel.

"He sleeps!" he replied, in so low a voice that the

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words could be heard by the young woman only, as sound is heard in its echo.

The lady turned pale; her furtive glance left for a moment the vellum page of the prayer-book and turned to the old man whom the young man had designated. What terrible complicity was in that glance? When the young woman had cautiously examined the old seigneur, she drew a long breath and raised her forehead, adorned with a precious jewel, toward a picture of the Virgin; that simple movement, that attitude, the moistened glance, revealed her life with imprudent naïveté; had she been wicked, she would certainly have dissimulated. The personage who thus alarmed the lovers was a little old man, hunchbacked, nearly bald, savage in expression, and wearing a long and discolored white beard cut in a fan-tail. The cross of Saint-Michel glittered on his breast; his coarse, strong hands, covered with gray hairs, which had been clasped, had now dropped slightly apart in the slumber to which he had imprudently yielded. The right hand seemed about to fall upon his dagger, the hilt of which was in the form of an iron shell. By the manner in which he had placed the weapon, this hilt was directly under his hand; if, unfortunately, the hand touched the iron, he would wake, no doubt, instantly, and glance at his wife. His sardonic lips, his pointed chin aggressively pushed forward, presented the characteristic signs of a malignant spirit, a sagacity coldly cruel, that would surely enable him to divine all because he suspected everything. His yellow forehead was wrinkled like those of men whose habit it is to believe nothing, to weigh all things, and who, like

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misers chinking their gold, search out the meaning and the value of human actions. His bodily frame, though deformed, was bony and solid, and seemed both vigorous and excitable; in short, you might have thought him a stunted ogre. Consequently, an inevitable danger awaited the young lady whenever this terrible seigneur woke. That jealous husband would surely not fail to see the difference between a worthy old burgher who gave him no umbrage, and the newcomer, young, slender, and elegant.

"*Libera nos a malo*," she said, endeavoring to make the young man comprehend her fears.

The latter raised his head and looked at her. Tears were in his eyes; tears of love and of despair. At sight of them the lady trembled and betrayed herself. Both had, no doubt, long resisted and could resist no longer a love increasing day by day through invincible obstacles, nurtured by terror, strengthened by youth. The lady was moderately handsome; but her pallid skin told of secret sufferings that made her interesting. She had, moreover, an elegant figure, and the finest hair in the world. Guarded by a tiger, she risked her life in whispering a word, accepting a look, and permitting a mere pressure of the hand. Love may never have been more deeply felt than in those hearts, never more delightfully enjoyed, but certainly no passion was ever more perilous. It was easy to divine that to these two beings air, sound, foot-falls, etc., things indifferent to other men, presented hidden qualities, peculiar properties which they distinguished. Perhaps their love made them find faithful interpreters in the icy hands of the old priest to whom they con-

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fessed their sins, and from whom they received the Host at the holy table. Love profound! love gashed into the soul like a scar upon the body which we carry through life! When these two young people looked at each other, the woman seemed to say to her lover, "Let us love each other and die!" To which the young knight answered, "Let us love each other and not die." In reply, she showed him with a sign her old duenna and two pages. The duenna slept; the pages were young and seemingly careless of what might happen, either of good or evil, to their masters.

"Do not be frightened as you leave the church; let yourself be managed."

The young nobleman had scarcely said these words in a low voice, when the hand of the old seigneur dropped upon the hilt of his dagger. Feeling the cold iron he woke, and his yellow eyes fixed themselves instantly on his wife. By a privilege seldom granted even to men of genius, he awoke with his mind as clear, his ideas as lucid as though he had not slept at all. The man had the mania of jealousy. The lover, with one eye on his mistress, had watched the husband with the other, and he now rose quickly, effacing himself behind a column at the moment when the hand of the old man fell; after which he disappeared, swiftly as a bird. The lady lowered her eyes to her book and tried to seem calm; but she could not prevent her face from blushing and her heart from beating with unnatural violence. The old lord saw the unusual crimson on the cheeks, forehead, even the eyelids of his wife. He looked about him cautiously, but seeing no one to distrust, he said to his wife: —

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"What are you thinking of, my dear?"

"The smell of the incense turns me sick," she replied.

"Is it particularly bad to-day?" he asked.

In spite of this sarcastic query, the wily old man pretended to believe in this excuse; but he suspected some treachery and he resolved to watch his treasure more carefully than before.

The benediction was given. Without waiting for the end of the *Sæcula sæculorum*, the crowd rushed like a torrent to the doors of the church. Following his usual custom, the old seigneur waited till the general hurry was over; after which he left his chapel, placing the duenna and the youngest page, carrying a lantern, before him; then he gave his arm to his wife and told the other page to follow them.

As he made his way to the lateral door which opened on the west side of the cloister, through which it was his custom to pass, a stream of persons detached itself from the flood which obstructed the great portals, and poured through the side aisle around the old lord and his party. The mass was too compact to allow him to retrace his steps, and he and his wife were therefore pushed onward to the door by the pressure of the multitude behind them. The husband tried to pass out first, dragging the lady by the arm, but at that instant he was pulled vigorously into the street, and his wife was torn from him by a stranger. The terrible hunchback saw at once that he had fallen into a trap that was cleverly prepared. Repenting himself for having slept, he collected his whole strength, seized his wife once more by the sleeve of her gown, and strove with

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his other hand to cling to the gate of the church; but the ardor of love carried the day against jealous fury. The young man took his mistress round the waist, and carried her off so rapidly, with the strength of despair, that the brocaded stuff of silk and gold tore noisily apart, and the sleeve alone remained in the hand of the old man. A roar like that of a lion rose louder than the shouts of the multitude, and a terrible voice howled out the words: —

"To me, Poitiers! Servants of the Comte de Saint-Vallier, here! Help! help!"

And the Comte Aymar de Poitiers, sire de Saint-Vallier, attempted to draw his sword and clear a space around him. But he found himself surrounded and pressed upon by forty or fifty gentlemen whom it would be dangerous to wound. Several among them, especially those of the highest rank, answered him with jests as they dragged him along the cloisters.

With the rapidity of lightning the abductor carried the countess into an open chapel and seated her behind the confessional on a wooden bench. By the light of the tapers burning before the saint to whom the chapel was dedicated, they looked at each other for a moment in silence, clasping hands, and amazed at their own audacity. The countess had not the cruel courage to reproach the young man for the boldness to which they owed this perilous and only instant of happiness.

"Will you fly with me into the adjoining States?" said the young man, eagerly. "Two English horses are awaiting us close by, able to do thirty leagues at a stretch."

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"Ah!" she cried, softly, "in what corner of the world could you hide a daughter of King Louis XI.?"

"True," replied the young man, silenced by a difficulty he had not foreseen.

"Why did you tear me from my husband?" she asked in a sort of terror.

"Alas!" said her lover, "I did not reckon on the trouble I should feel in being near you, in hearing you speak to me. I have made plans, — two or three plans, — and now that I see you all seems accomplished."

"But I am lost!" said the countess.

"We are saved!" the young man cried in the blind enthusiasm of his love. "Listen to me carefully!"

"This will cost me my life!" she said, letting the tears that rolled in her eyes flow down her cheeks. "The count will kill me, — to-night perhaps! But go to the king; tell him the tortures that his daughter has endured these five years. He loved me well when I was little; he called me 'Marie-full-of-grace,' because I was ugly. Ah! if he knew the man to whom he gave me, his anger would be terrible. I have not dared complain, out of pity for the count. Besides, how could I reach the king? My confessor himself is a spy of Saint-Vallier. That is why I have consented to this guilty meeting, to obtain a defender, — some one to tell the truth to the king. Can I rely on — Oh!" she cried, turning pale and interrupting herself, "here comes the page!"

The poor countess put her hands before her face as if to veil it.

"Fear nothing," said the young seigneur, "he is won! You can safely trust him; he belongs to me.

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When the count contrives to return for you he will warn us of his coming. In the confessional," he added, in a low voice, "is a priest, a friend of mine, who will tell him that he drew you for safety out of the crowd, and placed you under his own protection in this chapel. Therefore, everything is arranged to deceive him."

At these words the tears of the poor woman stopped, but an expression of sadness settled down on her face.

"No one can deceive him," she said. "To-night he will know all. Save me from his blows! Go to Plessis, see the king, tell him —" she hesitated; then, some dreadful recollection giving her courage to confess the secrets of her marriage, she added: "Yes, tell him that to master me the count bleeds me in both arms — to exhaust me. Tell him that my husband drags me about by the hair of my head. Say that I am a prisoner; that —"

Her heart swelled, sobs choked her throat, tears fell from her eyes. In her agitation she allowed the young man, who was muttering broken words, to kiss her hands.

"Poor darling! no one can speak to the king. Though my uncle is grand-master of his archers, I could not gain admission to Plessis. My dear lady! my beautiful sovereign! oh, how she has suffered! Marie, let yourself say but two words, or we are lost!"

"What will become of us?" she murmured. Then, seeing on the dark wall a picture of the Virgin, on which the light from the lamp was falling, she cried out: —

"Holy Mother of God, give us counsel!"

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"To-night," said the young man, "I shall be with you in your room."

"How?" she asked naïvely.

They were in such great peril that their tenderest words were devoid of love.

"This evening," he replied, "I shall offer myself as apprentice to Maître Cornélius, the king's silversmith. I have obtained a letter of recommendation to him which will make him receive me. His house is next to yours. Once under the roof of that old thief, I can soon find my way to your apartment by the help of a silken ladder."

"Oh!" she said, petrified with horror, "if you love me don't go to Maître Cornélius."

"Ah!" he cried, pressing her to his heart with all the force of his youth, "you do indeed love me!"

"Yes," she said; "are you not my hope? You are a gentleman, and I confide to you my honor. Besides," she added, looking at him with dignity, "I am so unhappy that you would never betray my trust. But what is the good of all this? Go, let me die, sooner than that you should enter that house of Maître Cornélius. Do you not know that all his apprentices —"

"Have been hanged," said the young man, laughing.

"Oh, don't go; you will be made the victim of some sorcery."

"I cannot pay too dearly for the joy of serving you," he said, with a look that made her drop her eyes.

"But my husband?" she said.

"Here is something to put him to sleep," replied her lover, drawing from his belt a little vial.

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"Not for always?" said the countess, trembling.

For all answer the young seigneur made a gesture of horror.

"I would long ago have defied him to mortal combat if he were not so old," he said. "God preserve me from ridding you of him in any other way."

"Forgive me," said the countess, blushing. "I am cruelly punished for my sins. In a moment of despair I thought of killing him, and I feared you might have the same desire. My sorrow is great that I have never yet been able to confess that wicked thought; but I fear it would be repeated to him and he would avenge it. I have shamed you," she continued, distressed by his silence, "I deserve your blame."

And she broke the vial by flinging it on the floor violently.

"Do not come," she said, "my husband sleeps lightly; my duty is to wait for the help of Heaven — that will I do!"

She tried to leave the chapel.

"Ah!" cried the young man, "order me to do so and I will kill him. You will see me to-night."

"I was wise to destroy that drug," she said in a voice that was faint with the pleasure of finding herself so loved. "The fear of awakening my husband will save us from ourselves."

"I pledge you my life," said the young man, pressing her hand.

"If the king is willing, the pope can annul my marriage. We will then be united," she said, giving him a look that was full of delightful hopes.

"Monseigneur comes!" cried the page, rushing in.

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Instantly the young nobleman, surprised at the short time he had gained with his mistress and wondering greatly at the celerity of the count, snatched a kiss, which was not refused.

"To-night!" he said, slipping hastily from the chapel.

Thanks to the darkness, he reached the great portal safely, gliding from column to column in the long shadows which they cast athwart the nave. An old canon suddenly issued from the confessional, came to the side of the countess and closed the iron railing before which the page was marching gravely up and down with the air of a watchman.

A strong light now announced the coming of the count. Accompanied by several friends and by servants bearing torches, he hurried forward, a naked sword in hand. His gloomy eyes seemed to pierce the shadows and to rake even the darkest corners of the cathedral.

"Monseigneur, madame is there," said the page, going forward to meet him.

The Comte de Saint-Vallier found his wife kneeling on the steps of the altar, the old priest standing beside her and reading his breviary. At that sight the count shook the iron railing violently as if to give vent to his rage.

"What do you want here, with a drawn sword in a church?" asked the priest.

"Father, that is my husband," said the countess.

The priest took a key from his sleeve, and unlocked the railed door of the chapel. The count, almost in spite of himself, cast a look into the confessional, then

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he entered the chapel, and seemed to be listening attentively to the sounds in the cathedral.

"Monsieur," said his wife, "you owe many thanks to this venerable canon, who gave me a refuge here."

The count turned pale with anger; he dared not look at his friends, who had come there more to laugh at him than to help him. Then he answered curtly:

"Thank God, father, I shall find some way to repay you."

He took his wife by the arm and, without allowing her to finish her curtsey to the canon, he signed to his servants and left the church without a word to the others who had accompanied him. His silence had something savage and sullen about it. Impatient to reach his home and preoccupied in searching for means to discover the truth, he took his way through the tortuous streets which at that time separated the cathedral from the Chancellerie, a fine building recently erected by the Chancellor Juvénal des Ursins, on the site of an old fortification given by Charles VII. to that faithful servant as a reward for his glorious labors.

The count reached at last the rue du Mûrier, in which his dwelling, called the hôtel de Poitiers, was situated. When his escort of servants had entered the courtyard and the heavy gates were closed, a deep silence fell on the narrow street, where other great seigneurs had their houses, for this new quarter of the town was near to Plessis, the usual residence of the king, to whom the courtiers, if sent for, could go in a moment. The last house in this street was also the last in the town. It belonged to Maître Cornélius Hoogworst, an old Braban-

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tian merchant, to whom King Louis XI. gave his utmost confidence in those financial transactions which his crafty policy induced him to undertake outside of his own kingdom.

Observing the outline of the houses occupied respectively by Maître Cornélius and by the Comte de Poitiers, it was easy to believe that the same architect had built them both and destined them for the use of tyrants. Each was sinister in aspect, resembling a small fortress, and both could be well defended against an angry populace. Their corners were upheld by towers like those which lovers of antiquities remark in towns where the hammer of the iconoclast has not yet prevailed. The bays, which had little depth, gave a great power of resistance to the iron shutters of the windows and doors. The riots and the civil wars so frequent in those tumultuous times were ample justification for these precautions.

As six o'clock was striking from the great tower of the Abbey Saint-Martin, the lover of the hapless countess passed in front of the hôtel de Poitiers and paused for a moment to listen to the sounds made in the lower hall by the servants of the count, who were supping. Casting a glance at the window of the room where he supposed his love to be, he continued his way to the adjoining house. All along his way, the young man had heard the joyous uproar of many feasts given throughout the town in honor of the day. The ill-joined shutters sent out streaks of light, the chimneys smoked, and the comforting odor of roasted meats pervaded the town. After the conclusion of the church services, the inhabitants were regaling them-

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selves, with murmurs of satisfaction which fancy can picture better than words can paint. But at this particular spot a deep silence reigned, because in these two houses lived two passions which never rejoiced. Beyond them stretched the silent country. Beneath the shadow of the steeples of Saint-Martin, these two mute dwellings, separated from the others in the same street and standing at the crooked end of it, seemed afflicted with leprosy. The building opposite to them, the home of the criminals of the State, was also under a ban. A young man would be readily impressed by this sudden contrast. About to fling himself into an enterprise that was horribly hazardous, it is no wonder that the daring young seigneur stopped short before the house of the silversmith, and called to mind the many tales furnished by the life of Maître Cornélius, — tales which had caused such singular horror to the countess. At this period a man of war, and even a lover, trembled at the mere word "magic." Few indeed were the minds and the imaginations which disbelieved in occult facts and tales of the marvellous. The lover of the Comtesse de Saint-Vallier, one of the daughters whom Louis XI. had in Dauphiné by Madame de Sassenage, however bold he might be in other respects, was likely to think twice before he finally entered the house of a so-called sorcerer.

The history of Maître Cornélius Hoogworst will fully explain the security which the silversmith inspired in the Comte de Saint-Vallier, the terror of the countess, and the hesitation that now took possession of the lover. But, in order to make the readers of this nineteenth century understand how such commonplace

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events could be turned into anything supernatural, and to make them share the alarms of that olden time, it is necessary to interrupt the course of this narrative and cast a rapid glance on the preceding life and adventures of Maître Cornélius.

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II.

THE TORÇONNIER.

CORNÉLIUS HOOGWORST, one of the richest merchants in Ghent, having drawn upon himself the enmity of Charles, Duke of Burgundy, found refuge and protection at the court of Louis XI. The king was conscious of the advantages he could gain from a man connected with all the principal commercial houses of Flanders, Venice, and the Levant; he naturalized, ennobled, and flattered Maître Cornélius; all of which was rarely done by Louis XI. The monarch pleased the Fleming as much as the Fleming pleased the monarch. Wily, distrustful, and miserly; equally politic, equally learned; superior, both of them, to their epoch; understanding each other marvellously; they discarded and resumed with equal facility, the one his conscience, the other his religion; they loved the same Virgin, one by conviction, the other by policy; in short, if we may believe the jealous tales of Olivier le Daim and Tristan, the king went to the house of the Fleming for those diversions with which King Louis XI. diverted himself. History has taken care to transmit to our knowledge the licentious tastes of a monarch who was not averse to debauchery. The old Fleming found, no doubt, both pleasure and profit in lending himself to the capricious pleasures of his royal client.

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Cornélius had now lived nine years in the city of Tours. During those years extraordinary events had happened in his house, which had made him the object of general execration. On his first arrival, he had spent considerable sums in order to put the treasures he brought with him in safety. The strange inventions made for him secretly by the locksmiths of the town, the curious precautions taken in bringing those locksmiths to his house in a way to compel their silence, were long the subject of countless tales which enlivened the evening gatherings of the city. These singular artifices on the part of the old man made every one suppose him the possessor of Oriental riches. Consequently the *narrators* of that region — the home of the tale in France — built rooms full of gold and precious stones in the Fleming's house, not omitting to attribute all this fabulous wealth to compacts with Magic.

Maître Cornélius had brought with him from Ghent two Flemish valets, an old woman, and a young apprentice; the latter, a youth with a gentle, pleasing face, served him as secretary, cashier, factotum, and courier. During the first year of his settlement in Tours, a robbery of considerable amount took place in his house, and judicial inquiry showed that the crime must have been committed by one of its inmates. The old miser had his two valets and the secretary put in prison. The young man was feeble and he died under the sufferings of the "question" protesting his innocence. The valets confessed the crime to escape torture; but when the judge required them to say where the stolen property could be found, they kept silence,

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were again put to the torture, judged, condemned, and hanged. On their way to the scaffold they declared themselves innocent, according to the custom of all persons about to be executed.

The city of Tours talked much of this singular affair; but the criminals were Flemish, and the interest felt in their unhappy fate soon evaporated. In those days wars and seditions furnished endless excitements, and the drama of each day eclipsed that of the night before. More grieved by the loss he had met with than by the death of his three servants, Maître Cornélius lived alone in his house with the old Flemish woman, his sister. He obtained permission from the king to use the state couriers for his private affairs, sold his mules to a muleteer of the neighborhood, and lived from that moment in the deepest solitude, seeing no one but the king, doing his business by means of Jews, who, shrewd calculators, served him well in order to obtain his all-powerful protection.

Some time after this affair, the king himself procured for his old *torçonnier* a young orphan in whom he took an interest. Louis XI. called Maître Cornélius familiarly by that obsolete term, which, under the reign of Saint-Louis, meant a usurer, a collector of imposts, a man who pressed others by violent means. The epithet, *tortionnaire*, which remains to this day in our legal phraseology, explains the old word *torçonnier*, which we often find spelt *tortionneur*. The poor young orphan devoted himself carefully to the affairs of the old Fleming, pleased him much, and was soon high in his good graces. During a winter's night, certain diamonds deposited with Maître Cornélius by the King

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of England as security for a sum of a hundred thousand crowns were stolen, and suspicion, of course, fell on the orphan. Louis XI. was all the more severe because he had answered for the youth's fidelity. After a very brief and summary examination by the grand provost, the unfortunate secretary was hanged. After that no one dared for a long time to learn the arts of banking and exchange from Maître Cornélius.

In course of time, however, two young men of the town, Touraineans, — men of honor, and eager to make their fortunes, — took service with the silversmith. Robberies coincided with the admission of the two young men into the house. The circumstances of these crimes, the manner in which they were perpetrated, showed plainly that the robbers had secret communication with its inmates. Become by this time more than ever suspicious and vindictive, the old Fleming laid the matter before Louis XI., who placed it in the hands of his grand provost. A trial was promptly had and promptly ended. The inhabitants of Tours blamed Tristan l'Hermite secretly for unseemly haste. Guilty or not guilty, the young Touraineans were looked upon as victims, and Cornélius as an executioner. The two families thus thrown into mourning were much respected; their complaints obtained a hearing, and little by little it came to be believed that all the victims whom the king's silversmith had sent to the scaffold were innocent. Some persons declared that the cruel miser imitated the king, and sought to put terror and gibbets between himself and his fellow-men; others said that he had never been robbed at all, — that these melancholy executions were

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the result of cool calculation, and that their real object was to relieve him of all fear for his treasure.

The first effect of these rumors was to isolate Maître Cornélius. The Touraineans treated him like a leper, called him the "tortionnaire," and named his house Malemaison. If the Fleming had found strangers to the town bold enough to enter it, the inhabitants would have warned them against doing so. The most favorable opinion of Maître Cornélius was that of persons who thought him merely baneful. Some he inspired with instinctive terror; others he impressed with the deep respect that most men feel for limitless power and money, while to a few he certainly possessed the attraction of mystery. His way of life, his countenance, and the favor of the king, justified all the tales of which he had now become the subject.

Cornélius travelled much in foreign lands after the death of his persecutor, the Duke of Burgundy; and during his absence the king caused his premises to be guarded by a detachment of his own Scottish guard. Such royal solicitude made the courtiers believe that the old miser had bequeathed his property to Louis XI. When at home, the *torçonnier* went out but little; but the lords of the court paid him frequent visits. He lent them money rather liberally, though capricious in his manner of doing so. On certain days he refused to give them a penny; the next day he would offer them large sums, — always at high interest and on good security. A good Catholic, he went regularly to the services, always attending the earliest mass at Saint-Martin; and as he had purchased there, as elsewhere, a chapel in perpetuity, he was separated even

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in church from other Christians. A popular proverb of that day, long remembered in Tours, was the saying: "You passed in front of the Fleming; ill-luck will happen to you." *Passing in front of the Fleming* explained all sudden pains and evils, involuntary sadness, ill-turns of fortune among the Touraineans. Even at court most persons attributed to Cornélius that fatal influence which Italian, Spanish, and Asiatic superstition has called the "evil eye." Without the terrible power of Louis XI., which was stretched like a mantle over that house, the populace, on the slightest opportunity, would have demolished La Malemaison, that "evil house" in the rue du Mûrier. And yet Cornélius had been the first to plant mulberries in Tours, and the Touraineans at that time regarded him as their good genius. Who shall reckon on popular favor!

A few seigneurs having met Maître Cornélius on his journeys out of France were surprised at his friendliness and good-humor. At Tours he was gloomy and absorbed, yet he always returned there. Some inexplicable power brought him back to his dismal house in the rue du Mûrier. Like a snail, whose life is so firmly attached to its shell, he admitted to the king that he was never at ease except under the bolts and behind the vermiculated stones of his little bastille; yet he knew very well that whenever Louis XI. died, the place would be the most dangerous spot on earth for him.

"The devil is amusing himself at the expense of our crony, the *torçonnier*," said Louis XI. to his barber, a few days before the festival of All-Saints. "He says he has been robbed again, but he can't hang

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anybody this time unless he hangs himself. The old vagabond came and asked me if, by chance, I had carried off a string of rubies he wanted to sell me. '*Pasques-Dieu!* I don't steal what I can take,' I said to him."

"Was he frightened?" asked the barber.

"Misers are afraid of only one thing," replied the king. "My crony the *torçonnier* knows very well that I shall not plunder him unless for good reason; otherwise I should be unjust, and I have never done anything but what is just and necessary."

"And yet that old brigand overcharges you," said the barber.

"You wish he did, don't you?" replied the king, with a malicious look at his barber.

"*Ventre-Mahom*, sire, the inheritance would be a fine one between you and the devil!"

"There, there!" said the king, "don't put bad ideas into my head. My crony is a more faithful man than those whose fortunes I have made — perhaps because he owes me nothing."

For the last two years Maître Cornélius had lived entirely alone with his aged sister, who was thought a witch. A tailor in the neighborhood declared that he had often seen her at night, on the roof of the house, waiting for the hour of the witches' sabbath. This fact seemed the more extraordinary because it was known to be the miser's custom to lock up his sister at night in a bedroom with iron-barred windows.

As he grew older, Cornélius, constantly robbed, and always fearful of being duped by men, came to hate mankind, with the one exception of the king, whom he

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greatly respected. He fell into extreme misanthropy, but, like most misers, his passion for gold, the assimilation, as it were, of that metal with his own substance, became closer and closer, and age intensified it. His sister herself excited his suspicions, though she was perhaps more miserly, more rapacious than her brother whom she actually surpassed in penurious inventions. Their daily existence had something mysterious and problematical about it. The old woman rarely took bread from the baker; she appeared so seldom in the market, that the least credulous of the townspeople ended by attributing to these strange beings the knowledge of some secret for the maintenance of life. Those who dabbled in alchemy declared that Maître Cornélius had the power of making gold. Men of science averred that he had found the Universal Panacea. According to many of the country-people to whom the townsfolk talked of him, Cornélius was a chimerical being, and many of them came into the town to look at his house out of mere curiosity.

The young seigneur whom we left in front of that house looked about him, first at the hôtel de Poitiers, the home of his mistress, and then at the evil house. The moonbeams were creeping round their angles, and tinting with a mixture of light and shade the hollows and reliefs of the carvings. The caprices of this white light gave a sinister expression to both edifices; it seemed as if Nature herself encouraged the superstitions that hung about the miser's dwelling. The young man called to mind the many traditions which made Cornélius a personage both curious and formidable. Though quite decided through the violence of his love

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to enter that house, and stay there long enough to accomplish his design, he hesitated to take the final step, all the while aware that he should certainly take it. But where is the man who, in a crisis of his life, does not willingly listen to presentiments as he hangs above the precipice? A lover worthy of being loved, the young man feared to die before he had been received for love's sake by the countess.

This mental deliberation was so painfully interesting that he did not feel the cold wind as it whistled round the corner of the building, and chilled his legs. On entering that house, he must lay aside his name, as already he had laid aside the handsome garments of nobility. In case of mishap, he could not claim the privileges of his rank nor the protection of his friends without bringing hopeless ruin on the Comtesse de Saint-Vallier. If her husband suspected the nocturnal visit of a lover, he was capable of roasting her alive in an iron cage, or of killing her by degrees in the dungeons of a fortified castle. Looking down at the shabby clothing in which he had disguised himself, the young nobleman felt ashamed. His black leather belt, his stout shoes, his ribbed socks, his linsey-woolsey breeches, and his gray woollen doublet made him look like the clerk of some poverty-stricken justice. To a noble of the fifteenth century it was like death itself to play the part of a beggarly burgher, and renounce the privileges of his rank. But — to climb the roof of the house where his mistress wept; to descend the chimney, or creep along from gutter to gutter to the window of her room; to risk his life to kneel beside her on a silken cushion before a glowing fire, during the sleep of a

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dangerous husband, whose snores would double their joy; to defy both heaven and earth in snatching the boldest of all kisses; to say no word that would not lead to death or at least to sanguinary combat if overheard, — all these voluptuous images and romantic dangers decided the young man. However slight might be the guerdon of his enterprise, could he only kiss once more the hand of his lady, he still resolved to venture all, impelled by the chivalrous and passionate spirit of those days. He never supposed for a moment that the countess would refuse him the soft happiness of love in the midst of such mortal danger. The adventure was too perilous, too impossible not to be attempted and carried out.

Suddenly all the bells in the town rang out the curfew, — a custom fallen elsewhere into desuetude, but still observed in the provinces, where venerable habits are abolished slowly. Though the lights were not put out, the watchmen of each quarter stretched the chains across the streets. Many doors were locked; the steps of a few belated burghers, attended by their servants, armed to the teeth and bearing lanterns, echoed in the distance. Soon the town, garroted as it were, seemed to be asleep, and safe from robbers and evil-doers, except through the roofs. In those days the roofs of houses were much frequented after dark. The streets were so narrow in the provincial towns, and even in Paris, that robbers could jump from the roofs on one side to those on the other. This perilous occupation was long the amusement of King Charles IX. in his youth, if we may believe the memoirs of his day.

Fearing to present himself too late to the old silver-

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smith, the young nobleman now went up to the door of the Malemaison intending to knock, when, on looking at it, his attention was excited by a sort of vision, which the writers of those days would have called *cornue*, — perhaps with reference to horns and hoofs. He rubbed his eyes to clear his sight, and a thousand diverse sentiments passed through his mind at the spectacle before him. On each side of the door was a face framed in a species of loophole. At first he took these two faces for grotesque masks carved in stone, so angular, distorted, projecting, motionless, discolored were they; but the cold air and the moonlight presently enabled him to distinguish the faint white mist which living breath sent from two purplish noses; then he saw in each hollow face, beneath the shadow of the eyebrows, two eyes of porcelain blue casting clear fire, like those of a wolf crouching in the brushwood as it hears the baying of the hounds. The uneasy gleam of those eyes was turned upon him so fixedly that, after receiving it for fully a minute, during which he examined the singular sight, he felt like a bird at which a setter points; a feverish tumult rose in his soul, but he quickly repressed it. The two faces, strained and suspicious, were doubtless those of Cornélius and his sister.

The young man feigned to be looking about him to see where he was, and whether this were the house named on a card which he drew from his pocket and pretended to read in the moonlight; then he walked straight to the door and struck three blows upon it, which echoed within the house as if it were the entrance to a cave. A faint light crept beneath the threshold,

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and an eye appeared at a small and very strong iron grating.

"Who is there?"

"A friend, sent by Oosterlinck, of Brussels."

"What do you want?"

"To enter."

"Your name?"

"Philippe Goulenoire."

"Have you brought credentials?"

"Here they are."

"Pass them through the box."

"Where is it?"

"To your left."

Philippe Goulenoire put the letter through the slit of an iron box above which was a loophole.

"The devil!" thought he, "plainly the king comes here, as they say he does; he could n't take more precautions at Plessis."

He waited for more than a quarter of an hour in the street. After that lapse of time, he heard Cornélius saying to his sister, "Close the traps of the door."

A clinking of chains resounded from within. Philippe heard the bolts run, the locks creak, and presently a small low door, iron-bound, opened to the slightest distance through which a man could pass. At the risk of tearing off his clothing, Philippe squeezed himself rather than walked into La Malemaison. A toothless old woman with a hatchet face, the eyebrows projecting like the handles of a caldron, the nose and chin so near together that a nut could scarcely pass between them, — a pallid, haggard creature, her hollow temples composed apparently of only bones and nerves, —

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guided the *soi-disant* foreigner silently into a lower room, while Cornélius followed prudently behind him.

"Sit there," she said to Philippe, showing him a three-legged stool placed at the corner of a carved stone fireplace, where there was no fire.

On the other side of the chimney-piece was a walnut table with twisted legs, on which was an egg in a plate and ten or a dozen little bread-sops, hard and dry and cut with studied parsimony. Two stools placed beside the table, on one of which the old woman sat down, showed that the miserly pair were eating their suppers. Cornélius went to the door and pushed two iron shutters into their place, closing, no doubt, the loopholes through which they had been gazing into the street; then he returned to his seat. Philippe Goulenoire (so called) next beheld the brother and sister dipping their sops into the egg in turn, and with the utmost gravity and the same precision with which soldiers dip their spoons in regular rotation into the mess-pot. This performance was done in silence. But as he ate, Cornélius examined the false apprentice with as much care and scrutiny as if he were weighing an old coin.

Philippe, feeling that an icy mantle had descended on his shoulders, was tempted to look about him; but, with the circumspection dictated by all amorous enterprises, he was careful not to glance, even furtively, at the walls; for he fully understood that if Cornélius detected him, he would not allow so inquisitive a person to remain in his house. He contented himself, therefore, by looking first at the egg and then at the old woman, occasionally contemplating his future master.

Louis XI.'s silversmith resembled that monarch

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He had even acquired the same gestures, as often happens where persons dwell together in a sort of intimacy. The thick eyebrows of the Fleming almost covered his eyes; but by raising them a little he could flash out a lucid, penetrating, powerful glance, the glance of men habituated to silence, and to whom the phenomenon of the concentration of inward forces has become familiar. His thin lips, vertically wrinkled, gave him an air of indescribable craftiness. The lower part of his face bore a vague resemblance to the muzzle of a fox, but his lofty, projecting forehead, with many lines, showed great and splendid qualities and a nobility of soul, the springs of which had been lowered by experience until the cruel teachings of life had driven it back into the farthest recesses of this most singular human being. He was certainly not an ordinary miser; and his passion covered, no doubt, extreme enjoyments and secret conceptions.

"What is the present rate of Venetian sequins?" he said abruptly to his future apprentice.

"Three-quarters at Brussels; one in Ghent."

"What is the freight on the Scheldt?"

"Three sous parisis."

"Any news at Ghent?"

"The brother of Liéven d'Herde is ruined."

"Ah!"

After giving vent to that exclamation, the old man covered his knee with the skirt of his dalmatian, a species of robe made of black velvet, open in front, with large sleeves and no collar, the sumptuous material being defaced and shiny. These remains of a magnificent costume, formerly worn by him as president

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of the tribunal of the Parchons, functions which had won him the enmity of the Duke of Burgundy, was now a mere rag.

Philippe was not cold; he perspired in his harness, dreading further questions. Until then the brief information obtained that morning from a Jew whose life he had formerly saved, had sufficed him, thanks to his good memory and the perfect knowledge the Jew possessed of the manners and habits of Maître Cornélius. But the young man who, in the first flush of his enterprise, had feared nothing was beginning to perceive the difficulties it presented. The solemn gravity of the terrible Fleming reacted upon him. He felt himself under lock and key, and remembered how the grand provost Tristan and his rope were at the orders of Maître Cornélius.

"Have you supped?" asked the silversmith, in a tone which signified, "You are not to sup."

The old maid trembled in spite of her brother's tone; she looked at the new inmate as if to gauge the capacity of the stomach she might have to fill, and said with a specious smile: —

"You have not stolen your name; your hair and moustache are as black as the devil's tail."

"I have supped," he said.

"Well then," replied the miser, "you can come back and see me to-morrow. I have done without an apprentice for some years. Besides, I wish to sleep upon the matter."

"Hey! by Saint-Bavon, monsieur, I am a Fleming; I don't know a soul in this place; the chains are up in the streets, and I shall be put in prison. However,"

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he added, frightened at the eagerness he was showing in his words, "if it is your good pleasure, of course I will go."

The oath seemed to affect the old man singularly.

"Come, come, by Saint-Bavon indeed, you shall sleep here."

"But—" said his sister, alarmed.

"Silence," replied Cornélius. "In his letter Oosterlinck tells me he will answer for this young man. You know," he whispered in his sister's ear, "we have a hundred thousand francs belonging to Oosterlinck? That 's a hostage, hey!"

"And suppose he steals those Bavarian jewels? *Tiens*, he looks more like a thief than a Fleming."

"Hush!" exclaimed the old man, listening attentively to some sound.

Both misers listened. A moment after the "Hush!" uttered by Cornélius, a noise produced by the steps of several men echoed in the distance on the other side of the moat of the town.

"It is the Plessis guard on their rounds," said the sister.

"Give me the key of the apprentice's room," said Cornélius.

The old woman made a gesture as if to take the lamp.

"Do you mean to leave us alone, without light?" cried Cornélius, in a meaning tone of voice. "At your age can't you see in the dark? It is n't difficult to find a key."

The sister understood the meaning hidden beneath these words and left the room. Looking at this singu-

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lar creature as she walked towards the door, Philippe Goulenoire was able to hide from Cornélius the glance which he hastily cast about the room. It was wainscoted in oak to the chair-strip, and the walls above were hung with yellow leather stamped with black arabesques; but what struck the young man most was a match-lock pistol with its formidable trigger. This new and terrible weapon lay close to Cornélius.

"How do you expect to earn your living with me?" said the latter.

"I have but little money," replied Philippe, "but I know good tricks in business. If you will pay me a sou on every mark I earn for you, that will satisfy me."

"A sou! a sou!" echoed the miser; "why, that's a good deal!"

At this moment the old sibyl returned with the key.

"Come," said Cornélius to Philippe.

The pair went out beneath the portico and mounted a spiral stone staircase, the round well of which rose through a high turret, beside the hall in which they had been sitting. At the first floor up the young man paused.

"No, no," said Cornélius. "The devil! this nook is the place where the king takes his ease."

The architect had constructed the room given to the apprentice under the pointed roof of the tower in which the staircase wound. It was a little round room, all of stone, cold and without ornament of any kind. The tower stood in the middle of the façade on the courtyard, which, like the courtyards of all provincial houses, was narrow and dark. At the farther end, through an

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iron railing, could be seen a wretched garden in which nothing grew but the mulberries which Cornélius had introduced. The young nobleman took note of all this through the loopholes on the spiral staircase, the moon casting, fortunately, a brilliant light. A cot, a stool, a mismatched pitcher and basin formed the entire furniture of the room. The light could enter only through square openings, placed at intervals in the outside wall of the tower, according, no doubt, to the exterior ornamentation.

"Here is your lodging," said Cornélius; "it is plain and solid and contains all that is needed for sleep. Good night! Do not leave this room as *the others* did."

After giving his apprentice a last look full of many meanings, Cornélius double-locked the door, took away the key and descended the staircase, leaving the young nobleman as much befooled as a bell-founder when on opening his mould he finds nothing. Alone, without light, seated on a stool, in a little garret from which so many of his predecessors had gone to the scaffold, the young fellow felt like a wild beast caught in a trap. He jumped upon the stool and raised himself to his full height in order to reach one of the little openings through which a faint light shone. Thence he saw the Loire, the beautiful slopes of Saint-Cyr, the gloomy marvels of Plessis, where lights were gleaming in the deep recesses of a few windows. Far in the distance lay the beautiful meadows of Touraine and the silvery stream of her river. Every point of this lovely nature had, at that moment, a mysterious grace; the windows, the waters, the roofs of the houses shone like diamonds

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in the trembling light of the moon. The soul of the young seigneur could not repress a sad and tender emotion.

"Suppose it is my last farewell!" he said to himself.

He stood there, feeling already the terrible emotions his adventure offered him, and yielding to the fears of a prisoner who, nevertheless, retains some glimmer of hope. His mistress illumined each difficulty. To him she was no longer a woman, but a supernatural being seen through the incense of his desires. A feeble cry, which he fancied came from the hôtel de Poitiers, restored him to himself and to a sense of his true situation. Throwing himself on his pallet to reflect on his course, he heard a slight movement which echoed faintly from the spiral staircase. He listened attentively, and the whispered words, "He has gone to bed," said by the old woman, reached his ear. By an accident unknown probably to the architect, the slightest noise on the staircase sounded in the room of the apprentices, so that Philippe did not lose a single movement of the miser and his sister who were watching him. He undressed, lay down, pretended to sleep, and employed the time during which the pair remained on the staircase, in seeking means to get from his prison to the hôtel de Poitiers.

About ten o'clock Cornélius and his sister, convinced that their new inmate was sleeping, retired to their rooms. The young man studied carefully the sounds they made in doing so, and thought he could recognize the position of their apartments; they must, he believed, occupy the whole second floor. Like all the houses of that period, this floor was next below the roof, from

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which its windows projected, adorned with spandrel tops that were richly sculptured. The roof itself was edged with a sort of balustrade, concealing the gutters for the rain water which gargoyles in the form of crocodile's heads discharged into the street. The young seigneur, after studying this topography as carefully as a cat, believed he could make his way from the tower to the roof, and thence to Madame de Vallier's by the gutters and the help of a gargoyle. But he did not count on the narrowness of the loop-holes of the tower; it was impossible to pass through them. He then resolved to get out upon the roof of the house through the window of the staircase on the second floor. To accomplish this daring project he must leave his room, and Cornélius had carried off the key.

By way of precaution, the young man had brought with him, concealed under his clothes, one of those poignards formerly used to give the *coup de grâce* in a duel when the vanquished adversary begged the victor to despatch him. This horrible weapon had on one side a blade sharpened like a razor, and on the other a blade that was toothed like a saw, but toothed in the reverse direction from that by which it would enter the body. The young man determined to use this latter blade to saw through the wood around the lock. Happily for him the staple of the lock was put on to the outside of the door by four stout screws. By the help of his dagger he managed, not without great difficulty, to unscrew and remove it altogether, carefully laying it aside and the four screws with it. By midnight he was free, and he went down the stairs without his shoes to reconnoitre the localities.

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He was not a little astonished to find a door wide open which led down a corridor to several chambers, at the end of which corridor was a window opening on a depression caused by the junction of the roofs of the hôtel de Poitiers and that of the Malemaison which met there. Nothing could express his joy, unless it be the vow which he instantly made to the Blessed Virgin to found a mass in her honor in the celebrated parish church of the Escrignoles at Tours. After examining the tall broad chimneys of the hôtel de Poitiers he returned upon his steps to fetch his dagger, when to his horror, he beheld a vivid light on the staircase and saw Maître Cornélius himself in his dalmatian, carrying a lamp, his eyes open to their fullest extent and fixed upon the corridor, at the entrance of which he stood like a spectre.

"If I open the window and jump upon the roofs, he will hear me," thought the young man.

The terrible old miser advanced, like the hour of death to a criminal. In this extremity Philippe, instigated by love, recovered his presence of mind; he slipped into a doorway, pressing himself back into the angle of it, and awaited the old man. When Cornélius, holding his lamp in advance of him, came into line with the current of air which the young man could send from his lungs, the lamp was blown out. Cornélius muttered vague words and swore a Dutch oath; but he turned and retraced his steps. The young man then rushed to his room, caught up his dagger and returned to the blessed window, opened it softly and jumped upon the roof.

Once at liberty under the open sky, he felt weak, so

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happy was he. Perhaps the extreme agitation of his danger or the boldness of the enterprise caused his emotion; victory is often as perilous as battle. He leaned against the balustrade, quivering with joy and saying to himself: —

"By which chimney can I get to her?"

He looked at them all. With the instinct given by love, he went to all and felt them to discover in which there had been a fire. Having made up his mind on that point, the daring young fellow stuck his dagger securely in a joint between two stones, fastened a silken ladder to it, threw the ladder down the chimney and risked himself upon it, trusting to his good blade, and to the chance of not having mistaken his mistress's room. He knew not whether Saint-Vallier was asleep or awake, but one thing he was resolved upon, he would hold the countess in his arms if it cost the life of two men.

Presently his feet gently touched the warm embers; he bent more gently still and saw the countess seated in an armchair; and she saw him. Pale with joy and palpitating, the timid creature showed him, by the light of the lamp, Saint-Vallier lying in a bed about ten feet from her. We may well believe their burning silent kisses echoed only in their hearts.

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III.

THE ROBBERY OF THE JEWELS OF THE DUKE OF BAVARIA.

THE next day, about nine in the morning, as Louis XI. was leaving his chapel after hearing mass, he found Maître Cornélius on his path.

"Good luck to you, crony," he said, shoving up his cap in his hasty way.

"Sire, I would willingly pay a thousand gold crowns if I could have a moment's talk with you; I have found the thief who stole the rubies and all the jewels of the Duke of —"

"Let us hear about that," said Louis XI., going out into the courtyard of Plessis, followed by his silversmith, Coyctier his physician, Olivier le Daim, and the captain of his Scottish guard. "Tell me about it. Another man to hang for you! Holà, Tristan!"

The grand provost, who was walking up and down the courtyard, came with slow steps, like a dog who exhibits his fidelity. The group paused under a tree. The king sat down on a bench and the courtiers made a circle about him.

"Sire, a man who pretended to be a Fleming has got the better of me —" began Cornélius.

"He must be crafty indeed, that fellow!" exclaimed Louis, wagging his head.

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"Oh, yes!" replied the silversmith, bitterly. "But methinks he'd have snared you yourself. How could I distrust a poor beggar recommended to me by Oosterlinck, one hundred thousand francs of whose money I hold in my hands? I will wager the Jew's letter and seal were forged! In short, sire, I found myself this morning robbed of those jewels you admired so much. They have been ravished from me, sire! To steal the jewels of the Elector of Bavaria! those scoundrels respect nothing! they'll steal your kingdom if you don't take care. As soon as I missed the jewels I went up to the room of that apprentice, who is, assuredly, a past-master in thieving. This time we don't lack proof. He had forced the lock of his door. But when he got back to his room, the moon was down and he couldn't find all the screws. Happily, I felt one under my feet when I entered the room. He was sound asleep, the beggar, tired out. Just fancy, gentlemen, he got down into my strong-room by the chimney. To-morrow, or to-night rather, I'll roast him alive. He had a silk ladder, and his clothes were covered with marks of his clambering over the roof and down the chimney. He meant to stay with me, and ruin me, night after night, the bold wretch! But where are the jewels? The country-folks coming into town early saw him on the roof. He must have had accomplices, who waited for him by that embankment you have been making. Ah, sire, you are the accomplice of fellows who come in boats; crack! they get off with everything, and leave no traces! But we hold this fellow as a key, the bold scoundrel! ah! a fine morsel he'll be for the gallows. With a little bit

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of *questioning* beforehand, we shall know all. Why, the glory of your reign is concerned in it! there ought not to be robbers in the land under so great a king."

The king was not listening. He had fallen into one of those gloomy meditations which became so frequent during the last years of his life. A deep silence reigned.

"This is your business," he said at length to Tristan; "take you hold of it."

He rose, walked a few steps away, and the courtiers left him alone. Presently he saw Cornélius, mounted on his mule, riding away in company with the grand provost.

"Where are those thousand gold crowns?" he called to him.

"Ah! sire, you are too great a king! there is no sum that can pay for your justice."

Louis XI. smiled. The courtiers envied the frank speech and privileges of the old silversmith, who promptly disappeared down the avenue of young mulberries which led from Tours to Plessis.

Exhausted with fatigue, the young seigneur had indeed fallen soundly asleep. Returning from his gallant adventure, he no longer felt the same courage and ardor to defend himself against distant or imaginary dangers with which he had rushed into the perils of the night. He had even postponed till the morrow the cleaning of his soiled garments; a great blunder, in which all else conspired. It was true that, lacking the moonlight, he had missed finding all the screws of that cursèd lock; he had no patience to look for them. With the *laisser-aller* of a tired man,

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he trusted to his luck, which had so far served him well. He did, however, make a sort of compact with himself to awake at daybreak, but the events of the day and the agitations of the night did not allow him to keep faith with himself. Happiness is forgetful. Cornélius no longer seemed formidable to the young man when he threw himself on the pallet where so many poor wretches had wakened to their doom; and this light-hearted heedlessness proved his ruin. While the king's silversmith rode back from Plessis, accompanied by the grand provost and his redoubtable archers, the false Goulenoire was being watched by the old sister, seated on the corkscrew staircase oblivious of the cold, and knitting socks for Cornélius.

The young man continued to dream of the secret delights of that charming night, ignorant of the danger that was galloping towards him. He saw himself on a cushion at the feet of the countess, his head on her knees in the ardor of his love; he listened to the story of her persecutions and the details of the count's tyranny; he grew pitiful over the poor lady, who was, in truth, the best-loved natural daughter of Louis XI. He promised her to go on the morrow and reveal her wrongs to that terrible father; everything, he assured her, should be settled as they wished, the marriage broken off, the husband banished, — and all this within reach of that husband's sword, of which they might both be the victims if the slightest noise awakened him. But in the young man's dream the gleam of the lamp, the flame of their eyes, the colors of the stuffs and the tapestries were more vivid, more of love was in the air, more fire about them, than there had been

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in the actual scene. The Marie of his sleep resisted far less than the living Marie those adoring looks, those tender entreaties, those adroit silences, those voluptuous solicitations, those false generosities, which render the first moments of a passion so completely ardent, and shed into the soul a fresh delirium at each new step in love.

Following the amorous jurisprudence of the period, Marie de Saint-Vallier granted to her lover all the superficial rights of the tender passion. She willingly allowed him to kiss her feet, her robe, her hands, her throat; she avowed her love, she accepted the devotion and life of her lover; she permitted him to die for her; she yielded to an intoxication which the sternness of her semi-chastity increased; but farther than that she would not go; and she made her deliverance the price of the highest rewards of his love. In those days, in order to dissolve a marriage it was necessary to go to Rome; to obtain the help of certain cardinals, and to appear before the sovereign pontiff in person armed with the approval of the king. Marie was firm in maintaining her liberty to love, that she might sacrifice it to him later. Nearly every woman in those days had sufficient power to establish her empire over the heart of a man in a way to make that passion the history of his whole life, the spring and principle of his highest resolutions. Women were a power in France; they were so many sovereigns; they had forms of noble pride; their lovers belonged to them far more than they gave themselves to their lovers; often their love cost blood, and to be their lover it was necessary to incur great dangers. But the Marie of his dream

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made small defence against the young seigneur's ardent entreaties. Which of the two was the reality? Did the false apprentice in his dream see the true woman? Had he seen in the hôtel de Poitiers a lady masked in virtue? The question is difficult to decide; and the honour of women demands that it be left, as it were, in litigation.

At the moment when the Marie of the dream may have been about to forget her high dignity as mistress, the lover felt himself seized by an iron hand, and the sour voice of the grand provost said to him: —

"Come, midnight Christian, who seeks God on the roofs, wake up!"

The young man saw the black face of Tristan l'Hermite above him, and recognized his sardonic smile; then, on the steps of the corkscrew staircase, he saw Cornélius, his sister, and behind them the provost guard. At that sight, and observing the diabolical faces expressing either hatred or curiosity of persons whose business it was to hang others, the so-called Philippe Goulenoire sat up on his pallet and rubbed his eyes.

"*Mort-Dieu!*" he cried, seizing his dagger, which was under the pillow. "Now is the time to play our knives."

"Ho, ho!" cried Tristan, "that's the speech of a noble. Methinks I see Georges d'Estouteville, the nephew of the grand master of the archives."

Hearing his real name uttered by Tristan, young d'Estouteville thought less of himself than of the dangers his recognition would bring upon his unfortunate mistress. To avert suspicion he cried out: —

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"*Ventre-Mahom!* help, help to me, comrades!"

After that outcry, made by a man who was really in despair, the young courtier gave a bound, dagger in hand, and reached the landing. But the myrmidons of the grand provost were accustomed to such proceedings. When Georges d'Estouteville reached the stairs they seized him dexterously, not surprised by the vigorous thrust he made at them with his dagger, the blade of which fortunately slipped on the corselet of a guard; then, having disarmed him, they bound his hands, and threw him on the pallet before their leader, who stood motionless and thoughtful.

Tristan looked silently at the prisoner's hands, then he said to Cornélius, pointing to them: —

"Those are not the hands of a beggar, nor of an apprentice. He is a noble."

"Say a thief!" cried the *torçonnier*. "My good Tristan, noble or serf, he has ruined me, the villain! I want to see his feet warmed in your pretty boots. He is, I don't doubt it, the leader of that gang of devils, visible and invisible, who know all my secrets, open my locks, rob me, murder me! They have grown rich out of me, Tristan. Ha! this time we shall get back the treasure, for the fellow has the face of the king of Egypt. I shall recover my dear rubies, and all the sums I have lost; and our worthy king shall have his share in the harvest."

"Oh, our hiding-places are much more secure than yours!" said Georges, smiling.

"Ha! the damned thief, he confesses!" cried the miser.

The grand provost was engaged in attentively ex-

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amining Georges d'Estouteville's clothes and the lock of the door.

"How did you get out those screws?"

Georges kept silence.

"Oh, very good, be silent if you choose. You will soon confess on the holy rack," said Tristan.

"That 's what I call business!" cried Cornélius.

"Take him off," said the grand provost to the guards.

Georges d'Estouteville asked permission to dress himself. On a sign from their chief, the men put on his clothing with the clever rapidity of a nurse who profits by the momentary tranquillity of her nursling.

An immense crowd cumbered the rue du Mûrier. The growls of the populace kept increasing, and seemed the precursors of a riot. From early morning the news of the robbery had spread through the town. On all sides the "apprentice," said to be young and handsome, had awakened public sympathy, and revived the hatred felt against Cornélius; so that there was not a young man in the town, nor a young woman with a fresh face and pretty feet to exhibit, who was not determined to see the victim. When Georges issued from the house, led by one of the provost's guard, who, after he had mounted his horse, kept the strong leathern thong that bound the prisoner tightly twisted round his arm, a horrible uproar arose. Whether the populace merely wished to see this new victim, or whether it intended to rescue him, certain it is that those behind pressed those in front upon the little squad of cavalry posted around the Malemaison. At this moment, Cornélius, aided by his sister, closed the door, and slammed the iron shutters with the violence of panic terror. Tristan, who

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was not accustomed to respect the populace of those days (inasmuch as they were not yet the sovereign people), cared little for a probable riot.

"Push on! push on!" he said to his men.

At the voice of their leader the archers spurred their horses towards the end of the street. The crowd, seeing one or two of their number knocked down by the horses and trampled on, and some others pressed against the sides of the houses and nearly suffocated, took the wiser course of retreating to their homes.

"Make room for the king's justice!" cried Tristan. "What are you doing here? Do you want to be hanged too? Go home, my friends, go home; your dinner is getting burnt. Hey! my good woman, go and darn your husband's stockings; get back to your needles."

Though such speeches showed that the grand provost was in good humor, they made the most obstreperous fly as if he were flinging the plague upon them.

At the moment when the first movement of the crowd took place, Georges d'Estouteville was stupefied at seeing, at one of the windows of the hôtel de Poitiers, his dear Marie de Saint-Vallier, laughing with the count. She was mocking at *him*, poor devoted lover, who was going to his death for her. But perhaps she was only amused at seeing the caps of the populace carried off on the spears of the archers. We must be twenty-three years old, rich in illusions, able to believe in a woman's love, loving ourselves with all the forces of our being, risking our life with delight on the faith of a kiss, and then betrayed, to understand the fury of hatred and despair which took possession of Georges d'Estouteville's heart at the sight of his laughing

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mistress, from whom he received a cold and indifferent glance. No doubt she had been there some time; she was leaning from the window with her arms on a cushion; she was at her ease, and her old man seemed content. He, too, was laughing, the cursèd hunchback! A few tears escaped the eyes of the young man; but when Marie de Saint-Vallier saw them she turned hastily away. Those tears were suddenly dried, however, when Georges beheld the red and white plumes of the page who was devoted to his interests. The count took no notice of this servitor, who advanced to his mistress on tiptoe. After the page had said a few words in her ear, Marie returned to the window. Escaping for a moment the perpetual watchfulness of her tyrant, she cast one glance upon Georges that was brilliant with the fires of love and hope, seeming to say: —

"I am watching over you."

Had she cried the words aloud to him, she could not have expressed their meaning more plainly than in that glance, full of a thousand thoughts, in which terror, hope, pleasure, the dangers of their mutual situation all took part. He had passed, in that one moment, from heaven to martyrdom and from martyrdom back to heaven! So then, the brave young seigneur, light-hearted and content, walked gayly to his doom; thinking that the horrors of the "question" were not sufficient payment for the delights of his love.

As Tristan was about leaving the rue du Mûrier, his people stopped him, seeing an officer of the Scottish guard riding towards them at full speed.

"What is it?" asked the provost.

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"Nothing that concerns you," replied the officer, disdainfully. "The king has sent me to fetch the Comte and Comtesse de Saint-Vallier, whom he invites to dinner."

The grand provost had scarcely reached the embankment leading to Plessis, when the count and his wife, both mounted, she on her white mule, he on his horse, and followed by two pages, joined the archers, in order to enter Plessis-lez-Tours in company. All were moving slowly. Georges was on foot, between two guards on horseback, one of whom held him still by the leathern thong. Tristan, the count, and his wife were naturally in advance; the criminal followed them. Mingling with the archers, the young page questioned them, speaking sometimes to the prisoner, so that he adroitly managed to say to him in a low voice: —

"I jumped the garden wall and took a letter to Plessis from madame to the king. She came near dying when she heard of the accusation against you. Take courage. She is going now to speak to the king about you."

Love had already given strength and wiliness to the countess. Her laughter was part of the heroism which women display in the great crises of life.

In spite of the singular fancy which possessed the author of "Quentin Durward" to place the royal castle of Plessis-lez-Tours upon a height, we must content ourselves by leaving it where it really was, namely on low land, protected on either side by the Cher and the Loire; also by the canal Sainte-Anne, so named by Louis XI. in honor of his beloved daughter, Madame

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de Beaujeu. By uniting the two rivers between the city of Tours and Plessis this canal not only served as a formidable protection to the castle, but it offered a most precious road to commerce. On the side towards Bréhémont, a vast and fertile plain, the park was defended by a moat, the remains of which still show its enormous breadth and depth. At a period when the power of artillery was still in embryo, the position of Plessis, long since chosen by Louis XI. for his favorite retreat, might be considered impregnable. The castle, built of brick and stone, had nothing remarkable about it; but it was surrounded by noble trees, and from its windows could be seen, through vistas cut in the park (*plexitium*), the finest points of view in the world. No rival mansion rose near this solitary castle, standing in the very centre of the little plain reserved for the king and guarded by four streams of water.

If we may believe tradition, Louis XI. occupied the west wing, and from his chamber he could see, at a glance the course of the Loire, the opposite bank of the river, the pretty valley which the Croisille waters, and part of the slopes of Saint-Cyr. Also, from the windows that opened on the courtyard, he saw the entrance to his fortress and the embankment by which he had connected his favorite residence with the city of Tours. If Louis XI. had bestowed upon the building of his castle the luxury of architecture which François I. displayed afterwards at Chambord, the dwelling of the kings of France would ever have remained in Touraine. It is enough to see this splendid position and its magical effects to be convinced

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of its superiority over the sites of all other royal residences.

Louis XI., now in the fifty-seventh year of his age, had scarcely more than three years longer to live; already he felt the coming on of death in the attacks of his mortal malady. Delivered from his enemies; on the point of increasing the territory of France by the possessions of the Dukes of Burgundy through the marriage of the Dauphin with Marguerite, heiress of Burgundy (brought about by means of Desquerdes, commander of his troops in Flanders); having established his authority everywhere, and now meditating ameliorations in his kingdom of all kinds, he saw time slipping past him rapidly with no further troubles than those of old age. Deceived by every one, even by the minions about him, experience had intensified his natural distrust. The desire to live became in him the egotism of a king who has incarnated himself in his people; he wished to prolong his life in order to carry out his vast designs.

All that the common-sense of publicists and the genius of revolutions has since introduced of change in the character of monarchy, Louis XI. had thought of and devised. Unity of taxation, equality of subjects before the law (the prince being then the law) were the objects of his bold endeavors. On All-Saints' eve he had gathered together the learned goldsmiths of his kingdom for the purpose of establishing in France a unity of weights and measures, as he had already established the unity of power. Thus, his vast spirit hovered like an eagle over his empire, joining in a singular manner the prudence of a king to the natural

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idiosyncrasies of a man of lofty aims. At no period of our history has the great figure of Monarchy been finer or more poetic. Amazing assemblage of contrasts! a great power in a feeble body; a spirit unbelieving as to all things here below, devoutly believing in the practices of religion; a man struggling with two powers greater than his own — the present and the future; the future in which he feared eternal punishment, a fear which led him to make so many sacrifices to the Church; the present, namely his life itself, for the saving of which he blindly obeyed Coyctier. This king, who crushed down all about him, was himself crushed down by remorse, and by disease in the midst of the great poem of defiant monarchy in which all power was concentrated. It was once more the gigantic and ever magnificent combat of Man in the highest manifestation of his forces tilting against Nature.

While awaiting his dinner, a repast which was taken in those days between eleven o'clock and mid-day, Louis XI., returning from a short promenade, sat down in a huge tapestried chair near the fireplace in his chamber. Olivier le Daim, and his doctor, Coyctier, looked at each other without a word, standing in the recess of a window and watching their master, who presently seemed asleep. The only sound that was heard were the steps of the two chamberlains on service, the Sire de Montrêsor, and Jean Dufou, Sire de Montbazon, who were walking up and down the adjoining hall. These two Tourainean seigneurs looked at the captain of the Scottish guard, who was sleeping in his chair, according to his usual custom. The king

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himself appeared to be dozing. His head had drooped upon his breast; his cap, pulled forward on his forehead, hid his eyes. Thus seated in his high chair, surmounted by the royal crown, he seemed crouched together like a man who had fallen asleep in the midst of some deep meditation.

At this moment Tristan and his cortège crossed the canal by the bridge of Sainte-Anne, about two hundred feet from the entrance to Plessis.

"Who is that?" said the king.

The two courtiers questioned each other with a look of surprise.

"He is dreaming," said Coyctier, in a low voice.

"*Pasques-Dieu!*" cried Louis XI., "do you think me mad? People are crossing the bridge. It is true I am near the chimney, and I may hear sounds more easily than you. That effect of nature might be utilized," he added thoughtfully.

"What a man!" said le Daim.

Louis XI. rose and went toward one of the windows that looked on the town. He saw the grand provost, and exclaimed: —

"Ha, ha! here's my crony and his thief. And here comes my little Marie de Saint-Vallier; I'd forgotten all about it. Olivier," he continued, addressing the barber, "go and tell Monsieur de Montbazon to serve some good Bourgueil wine at dinner, and see that the cook does n't forget the lampreys; Madame la comtesse likes both those things. Can I eat lampreys?" he added, after a pause, looking anxiously at Coyctier.

For all answer the physician began to examine his

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master's face. The two men were a picture in themselves.

History and the romance-writers have consecrated the brown camlet coat, and the breeches of the same stuff, worn by Louis XI. His cap, decorated with leaden medallions, and his collar of the order of Saint-Michel, are not less celebrated; but no writer, no painter has represented the face of that terrible monarch in his last years, — a sickly, hollow, yellow and brown face, all the features of which expressed a sour craftiness, a cold sarcasm. In that mask was the forehead of a great man, a brow furrowed with wrinkles, and weighty with high thoughts; but in his cheeks and on his lips there was something indescribably vulgar and common. Looking at certain details of that countenance you would have thought him a debauched husbandman, or a miserly pedler; and yet, above these vague resemblances and the decrepitude of a dying old man, the king, the man of power, rose supreme. His eyes, of a light yellow, seemed at first sight extinct; but a spark of courage and of anger lurked there, and at the slightest touch it could burst into flames and cast fire about him. The doctor was a stout burgher, with a florid face, dressed in black, peremptory, greedy of gain, and self-important. These two personages were framed, as it were, in that panelled chamber, hung with high-warped tapestries of Flanders, the ceiling of which, made of carved beams, was blackened by smoke. The furniture, the bed, all inlaid with arabesques in pewter, would seem to-day more precious than they were at that period when the arts were beginning to produce their choicest masterpieces.

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"Lampreys are not good for you," replied the physician.

That title, recently substituted for the former term of "myrrh-master," is still applied to the faculty in England. The name was at this period given to doctors everywhere.

"Then what may I eat?" asked the king, humbly.

"Salt mackerel. Otherwise, you have so much bile in motion that you may die on All-Souls' Day."

"To-day!" cried the king in terror.

"Compose yourself, sire," replied Coyctier. "I am here. Try not to fret your mind; find some way to amuse yourself."

"Ah!" said the king, "my daughter Marie used to succeed in that difficult business."

As he spoke, Imbert de Bastarnay, sire of Montrésor and Bridoré, rapped softly on the royal door. On receiving the king's permission he entered and announced the Comte and Comtesse de Saint-Vallier. Louis XI. made a sign. Marie appeared, followed by her old husband, who allowed her to pass in first.

"Good-day, my children," said the king.

"Sire," replied his daughter in a low voice, as she embraced him, "I want to speak to you in secret."

Louis XI. appeared not to have heard her. He turned to the door and called out in a hollow voice, "Holà, Dufou!"

Dufou, seigneur of Montbazon and grand cup-bearer of France, entered in haste.

"Go to the maître d'hôtel, and tell him I must have a salt mackerel for dinner. And go to Madame de Beaujeu, and let her know that I wish to dine alone to-

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day. Do you know, madame," continued the king, pretending to be slightly angry, "that you neglect me? It is almost three years since I have seen you. Come, come here, my pretty," he added, sitting down and holding out his arms to her. "How thin you have grown! Why have you let her grow so thin?" said the king, roughly, addressing the Comte de Poitiers.

The jealous husband cast so frightened a look at his wife that she almost pitied him.

"Happiness, sire!" he stammered.

"Ah! you love each other too much, — is that it?" said the king, holding his daughter between his knees. "I did right to call you Mary-full-of-grace. Coyctier, leave us! Now, then, what do you want of me?" he said to his daughter the moment the doctor had gone. "After sending me your —"

In this danger, Marie boldly put her hand on the king's lips and said in his ear, —

"I always thought you cautious and penetrating."

"Saint-Vallier," said the king, laughing, "I think that Bridoré has something to say to you."

The count left the room; but he made a gesture with his shoulders well known to his wife, who could guess the thoughts of the jealous man, and knew she must forestall his cruel designs.

"Tell me, my child, how do you think I am, — hey? Do I seem changed to you?"

"Sire, do you want me to tell you the real truth, or would you rather I deceived you?"

"No," he said, in a low voice, "I want to know truly what to expect."

"In that case, I think you look very ill to-day; but

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you will not let my truthfulness injure the success of my cause, will you?"

"What is your cause?" asked the king, frowning and passing a hand across his forehead.

"Ah, sire," she replied, "the young man you have had arrested for robbing your silversmith Cornélius, and who is now in the hands of the grand provost, is innocent of the robbery."

"How do you know that?" asked the king. Marie lowered her head and blushed.

"I need not ask if there is love in this business," said the king, raising his daughter's head gently and stroking her chin. "If you don't confess every morning, my daughter, you will go to hell."

"Cannot you oblige me without forcing me to tell my secret thoughts?"

"Where would be the pleasure?" cried the king, seeing only an amusement in this affair.

"Ah! do you want your pleasure to cost me grief?"

"Oh! you sly little girl, have n't you any confidence in me?"

"Then, sire, set that young nobleman at liberty."

"So! he is a nobleman, is he?" cried the king. "Then he is not an apprentice?"

"He is certainly innocent," she said.

"I don't see it so," said the king, coldly. "I am the law and justice of my kingdom, and I must punish evil-doers."

"Come, don't put on that solemn face of yours! Give me the life of that young man."

"Is it yours already?"

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"Sire," she said, "I am pure and virtuous. You are jesting at —"

"Then," said Louis XI., interrupting her, "as I am not to know the truth, I think Tristan had better clear it up."

Marie turned pale, but she made a violent effort and cried out: —

"Sire, I assure you, you will regret all this. The so-called thief stole nothing. If you will grant me his pardon, I will tell you everything, even though you may punish me."

"Ho, ho! this is getting serious," cried the king, shoving up his cap. "Speak out, my daughter."

"Well," she said, in a low voice, putting her lips to her father's ear, "he was in my room all night."

"He could be there, and yet rob Cornélius. Two robberies!"

"I have your blood in my veins, and I was not born to love a scoundrel. That young seigneur is the nephew of the captain-general of your archers."

"Well, well!" cried the king; "you are hard to confess."

With the words the king pushed his daughter from his knee, and hurried to the door of the room, but softly on tiptoe, making no noise. For the last moment or two, the light from a window in the adjoining hall, shining through a space below the door, had shown him the shadow of a listener's foot projected on the floor of his chamber. He opened the door abruptly, and surprised the Comte de Saint-Vallier eavesdropping.

"*Pasques-Dieu!*" he cried; "here's an audacity that deserves the axe."

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"Sire," replied Saint-Vallier, haughtily, "I would prefer an axe at my throat to the ornament of marriage on my head."

"You may have both," said Louis XI. "None of you are safe from such infirmities, messieurs. Go into the farther hall. Conyngham," continued the king, addressing the captain of the guard, "you are asleep! Where is Monsieur de Bridorê? Why do you let me be approached in this way? *Pasques-Dieu!* the lowest burgher in Tours is better served than I am."

After scolding thus, Louis re-entered his room; but he took care to draw the tapestried curtain, which made a second door, intended more to stifle the words of the king than the whistling of the harsh north wind.

"So, my daughter," he said, liking to play with her as a cat plays with a mouse, "Georges d'Estouteville was your lover last night?"

"Oh, no, sire!"

"No! Ah! by Saint-Carpion, he deserves to die. Did the scamp not think my daughter beautiful?"

"Oh! that is not it," she said. "He kissed my feet and hands with an ardor that might have touched the most virtuous of women. He loves me truly in all honor."

"Do you take me for Saint-Louis, and suppose I should believe such nonsense? A young fellow, made like him, to have risked his life just to kiss your little slippers or your sleeves! Tell that to others."

"But, sire, it is true. And he came for another purpose."

Having said those words, Marie felt that she had risked the life of her husband, for Louis instantly demanded:

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"'So, my daughter,' he said, liking to play with her as a cat plays with a mouse, 'Georges d'Estouteville was your lover last night?'"

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"What purpose?"

The adventure amused him immensely. But he did not expect the strange confidences his daughter now made to him after stipulating for the pardon of her husband.

"Ho, ho, Monsieur de Saint-Vallier! So you dare to shed the royal blood!" cried the king, his eyes lighting with anger.

At this moment the bell of Plessis sounded the hour of the king's dinner. Leaning on the arm of his daughter, Louis XI. appeared with contracted brows on the threshold of his chamber, and found all his servitors in waiting. He cast an ambiguous look on the Comte de Saint-Vallier, thinking of the sentence he meant to pronounce upon him. The deep silence which reigned was presently broken by the steps of Tristan l'Hermite as he mounted the grand staircase. The grand provost entered the hall, and, advancing toward the king, said: —

"Sire, the affair is settled."

"What! is it all over?" said the king.

"Our man is in the hands of the monks. He confessed the theft after a touch of the *question*."

The countess gave a sigh, and turned pale; she could not speak, but looked at the king. That look was observed by Saint-Vallier, who muttered in a low tone: "I am betrayed; that thief is an acquaintance of my wife."

"Silence!" cried the king. "Some one is here who will wear out my patience. Go at once and put a stop to the execution," he continued, addressing the grand provost. "You will answer with your own body for

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that of the criminal, my friend. This affair must be better sifted, and I reserve to myself the doing of it. Set the prisoner at liberty provisionally; I can always recover him; these robbers have retreats they frequent, lairs where they lurk. Let Cornélius know that I shall be at his house to-night to begin the inquiry myself. Monsieur de Saint-Vallier," said the king, looking fixedly at the count, "I know about you. All your blood could not pay for one drop of mine; do you hear me? By our Lady of Cléry! you have committed crimes of lèse-majesty. Did I give you such a pretty wife to make her pale and weakly? Go back to your own house, and make your preparations for a long journey."

The king stopped at these words from a habit of cruelty; then he added: —

"You will leave to-night to attend to my affairs with the government of Venice. You need be under no anxiety about your wife; I shall take charge of her at Plessis; she will certainly be safe here. Henceforth I shall watch over her with greater care than I have done since I married her to you."

Hearing these words, Marie silently pressed her father's arm as if to thank him for his mercy and goodness. As for Louis XI., he was laughing to himself in his sleeve.

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IV.

THE HIDDEN TREASURE.

Louis XI. was fond of intervening in the affairs of his subjects, and he was always ready to mingle his royal majesty with the burgher life. This taste, severely blamed by some historians, was really only a passion for the *incognito*, one of the greatest pleasures of princes, — a sort of momentary abdication, which enables them to put a little real life into their existence, made insipid by the lack of opposition. Louis XI., however, played the *incognito* openly. On these occasions he was always the good fellow, endeavoring to please the people of the middle classes, whom he made his allies against feudality. For some time past he had found no opportunity to "make himself populace" and espouse the domestic interests of some man *engarrié* (an old word still used in Tours, meaning engaged) in litigious affairs, so that he shouldered the anxieties of Maître Cornélius eagerly, and also the secret sorrows of the Comtesse de Saint-Vallier. Several times during dinner he said to his daughter: —

"Who, think you, could have robbed my silversmith? The robberies now amount to over twelve hundred thousand crowns in eight years. Twelve hundred thousand crowns, messieurs!" he continued, looking at the seigneurs who were serving him.

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"*Notre Dame!* with a sum like that what absolutions could be bought in Rome! And I might, *Pasques-Dieu!* bank the Loire, or, better still, conquer Piedmont, a fine fortification ready-made for this kingdom."

When dinner was over, Louis XI. took his daughter, his doctor, and the grand provost, with an escort of soldiers, and rode to the hôtel de Poitiers in Tours, where he found, as he expected, the Comte de Saint-Vallier awaiting his wife, perhaps to make away with her life.

"Monsieur," said the king, "I told you to start at once. Say farewell to your wife now, and go to the frontier; you will be accompanied by an escort of honor. As for your instructions and credentials, they will be in Venice before you get there."

Louis then gave the order — not without adding certain secret instructions — to a lieutenant of the Scottish guard to take a squad of men and accompany the ambassador to Venice. Saint-Vallier departed in haste, after giving his wife a cold kiss which he would fain have made deadly. Louis XI. then crossed over to the Malemaison, eager to begin the unravelling of the melancholy comedy, lasting now for eight years, in the house of his silversmith; flattering himself that, in his quality of king, he had enough penetration to discover the secret of the robberies. Cornélius did not see the arrival of the escort of his royal master without uneasiness.

"Are all those persons to take part in the inquiry?" he said to the king.

Louis XI. could not help smiling as he saw the fright of the miser and his sister.

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"No, my old crony," he said; "don't worry yourself. They will sup at Plessis, and you and I alone will make the investigation. I am so good in detecting criminals, that I will wager you ten thousand crowns I shall do so now."

"Find him, sire, and make no wager."

They went at once into the strong room, where the Fleming kept his treasure. There Louis, who asked to see, in the first place, the casket from which the jewels of the Duke of Burgundy had been taken, then the chimney down which the robber was supposed to have descended, easily convinced his silversmith of the falsity of the latter supposition, inasmuch as there was no soot on the hearth, — where, in truth, a fire was seldom made, — and no sign that any one had passed down the flue; and moreover that the chimney issued at a part of the roof which was almost inaccessible. At last, after two hours of close investigation, marked with that sagacity which distinguished the suspicious mind of Louis XI., it was clear to him, beyond all doubt, that no one had forced an entrance into the strong-room of his silversmith. No marks of violence were on the locks, nor on the iron coffers which contained the gold, silver, and jewels deposited as securities by wealthy debtors.

"If the robber opened this box," said the king, why did he take nothing out of it but the jewels of the Duke of Bavaria? What reason had he for leaving that pearl necklace which lay beside them? A queer robber!"

At that remark the unhappy miser turned pale; he and the king looked at each other for a moment.

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"Then, sire, what did that robber whom you have taken under your protection come to do here, and why did he prowl about at night?"

"If you have not guessed why, my crony, I order you to remain in ignorance. That is one of my secrets."

"Then the devil is in my house!" cried the miser, piteously.

In any other circumstances the king would have laughed at his silversmith's cry; but he had suddenly become thoughtful, and was now casting on the Fleming those glances peculiar to men of talent and power which seem to penetrate the brain. Cornélius was frightened, thinking he had in some way offended his dangerous master.

"Devil or angel, I have him, the guilty man!" cried Louis XI. abruptly. "If you are robbed again to-night, I shall know to-morrow who did it. Make that old hag you call your sister come here," he added.

Cornélius almost hesitated to leave the king alone in the room with his hoards; but the bitter smile on Louis's withered lips determined him. Nevertheless he hurried back, followed by the old woman.

"Have you any flour?" demanded the king.

"Oh yes; we have laid in our stock for the winter," she answered.

"Well, go and fetch some," said the king.

"What do you want to do with our flour, sire?" she cried, not the least impressed by his royal majesty.

"Old fool!" said Cornélius, "go and execute the orders of our gracious master. Shall the king lack flour?"

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"Our good flour!" she grumbled, as she went downstairs. "Ah! my flour!"

Then she returned, and said to the king: —

"Sire, is it only a royal notion to examine my flour?"

At last she reappeared, bearing one of those stout linen bags which, from time immemorial, have been used in Touraine to carry or bring, to and from market, nuts, fruits, or wheat. The bag was half full of flour. The housekeeper opened it and showed it to the king, on whom she cast the rapid, savage look with which old maids appear to squirt venom upon men.

"It costs six sous the *septerée*," she said.

"What does that matter?" said the king. "Spread it on the floor; but be careful to make an even layer of it — as if it had fallen like snow."

The old maid did not comprehend. This proposal astonished her as though the end of the world had come.

"My flour, sire! on the ground! But —"

Maître Cornélius, who was beginning to understand, though vaguely, the intentions of the king, seized the bag and gently poured its contents on the floor. The old woman quivered, but she held out her hand for the empty bag, and when her brother gave it back to her she disappeared with a heavy sigh.

Cornélius then took a feather broom and gently smoothed the flour till it looked like a fall of snow, retreating step by step as he did so, followed by the king, who seemed much amused by the operation. When they reached the door Louis XI. said to his silversmith, "Are there two keys to the lock?"

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"No, sire."

The king then examined the structure of the door, which was braced with large plates and bars of iron, all of which converged to a secret lock, the key of which was kept by Cornélius.

After examining everything, the king sent for Tristan, and ordered him to post several of his men for the night, and with the greatest secrecy, in the mulberry trees on the embankment and on the roofs of the adjoining houses, and to assemble at once the rest of his men and escort him back to Plessis, so as to give the idea in the town that he himself would not sup with Cornélius. Next, he told the miser to close his windows with the utmost care, that no single ray of light should escape from the house, and then he departed with much pomp for Plessis along the embankment; but there he secretly left his escort, and returned by a door in the ramparts to the house of the *torçonnier*. All these precautions were so well taken that the people of Tours really thought the king had returned to Plessis, and would sup on the morrow with Cornélius.

Towards eight o'clock that evening, as the king was supping with his physician, Cornélius, and the captain of his guard, and holding much jovial converse, forgetting for the time being that he was ill and in danger of death, the deepest silence reigned without, and all passers, even the wariest robber, would have believed that the Malemaison was occupied as usual.

"I hope," said the king, laughing, "that my silversmith will be robbed to-night, so that my curiosity may be satisfied. Therefore, messieurs, no one is to leave

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his chamber to-morrow morning without my order, under pain of grievous punishment."

Thereupon, all went to bed. The next morning, Louis XI. was the first to leave his apartment, and he went at once to the door of the strong-room. He was not a little astonished to see, as he went along, the marks of a large foot along the stairways and corridors of the house. Carefully avoiding those precious foot-prints, he followed them to the door of the treasure-room, which he found locked without a sign of fracture or defacement. Then he studied the direction of the steps; but as they grew gradually fainter, they finally left not the slightest trace, and it was impossible for him to discover where the robber had fled.

"Ho, crony!" called out the king, "you have been finely robbed this time."

At these words the old Fleming hurried out of his chamber, visibly terrified. Louis XI. made him look at the foot-prints on the stairs and corridors, and while examining them himself for the second time, the king chanced to observe the miser's slippers and recognized the type of sole that was printed in flour on the corridors. He said not a word, and checked his laughter, remembering the innocent men who had been hanged for the crime. The miser now hurried to his treasure. Once in the room the king ordered him to make a new mark with his foot beside those already existing, and easily convinced him that the robber of his treasure was no other than himself.

"The pearl necklace has gone!" cried Cornélius. "There is sorcery in this. I never left my room."

"We 'll know all about it now," said the king; the

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evident truthfulness of his silversmith making him still more thoughtful.

He immediately sent for the men he had stationed on the watch and asked: —

"What did you see during the night?"

"Oh, sire!" said the lieutenant, "an amazing sight! Your silversmith crept down the side of the wall like a cat; so lightly that he seemed to be a shadow."

"I!" exclaimed Cornélius; after that one word, he remained silent, and stood stock-still like a man who has lost the use of his limbs.

"Go away, all of you," said the king, addressing the archers, "and tell Messieurs Conyngham, Coyctier, Bridoré, and also Tristan, to leave their rooms and come here to mine. — You have incurred the penalty of death," he said to Cornélius, who, happily, did not hear him. "You have ten murders on your conscience!"

Thereupon Louis XI. gave a silent laugh, and made a pause. Presently, remarking the strange pallor on the Fleming's face, he added: —

"You need not be uneasy; you are more valuable to bleed than to kill. You can get out of the claws of *my* justice by payment of a good round sum to my treasury, but if you don't build at least one chapel in honor of the Virgin, you are likely to find things hot for you throughout eternity."

"Twelve hundred and thirty, and eighty-seven thousand crowns, make thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns," replied Cornélius mechanically, absorbed in his calculations. "Thirteen hundred and seventeen thousand crowns hidden somewhere!"

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"He must have buried them in some hiding-place," muttered the king, beginning to think the sum royally magnificent. "That was the magnet that invariably brought him back to Tours. He felt his treasure."

Coyctier entered at this moment. Noticing the attitude of Maître Cornélius, he watched him narrowly while the king related the adventure.

"Sire," replied the physician, "there is nothing supernatural in that. Your silversmith has the faculty of walking in his sleep. This is the third case I have seen of that singular malady. If you would give yourself the amusement of watching him at such times, you would see that old man stepping without danger at the very edge of the roof. I noticed in the two other cases I have already observed, a curious connection between the actions of that nocturnal existence and the interests and occupations of their daily life."

"Ah! Maître Coyctier, you are a wise man."

"I am your physician," replied the other, insolently.

At this answer, Louis XI. made the gesture which was customary with him when a good idea was presented to his mind; he shoved up his cap with a hasty motion.

"At such times," continued Coyctier, "persons attend to their business while asleep. As this man is fond of hoarding, he has simply pursued his dearest habit. No doubt each of these attacks have come on after a day in which he has felt some fears about the safety of his treasure."

"*Pasques-Dieu!* and such treasure!" cried the king.

"Where is it?" asked Cornélius, who, by a singular

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provision of nature, heard the remarks of the king and his physician, while continuing himself almost torpid with thought and the shock of this singular misfortune.

"Ha!" cried Coyctier, bursting into a diabolical, coarse laugh, "somnambulists never remember on their waking what they have done when asleep."

"Leave us," said the king.

When Louis XI. was alone with his silversmith, he looked at him and chuckled coldly.

"Messire Hoogworst," he said, with a nod, "all treasures buried in France belong to the king."

"Yes, sire, all is yours; you are the absolute master of our lives and fortunes; but, up to this moment, you have only taken what you need."

"Listen to me, old crony; if I help you to recover this treasure, you can surely, and without fear, agree to divide it with me."

"No, sire, I will not divide it; I will give it all to you, at my death. But what scheme have you for finding it?"

"I shall watch you myself when you are taking your nocturnal tramps. You might fear any one but me."

"Ah, sire!" cried Cornélius, flinging himself at the king's feet, "you are the only man in the kingdom whom I would trust for such a service; and I will try to prove my gratitude for your goodness, by doing my utmost to promote the marriage of the Burgundian heiress with Monseigneur. She will bring you a noble treasure, not of money, but of lands, which will round out the glory of your crown."

"There, there, Dutchman, you are trying to hood-

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wink me," said the king, with frowning brows, "or else you have already done so."

"Sire! can you doubt my devotion? you, who are the only man I love!"

"All that is talk," returned the king, looking the other in the eyes. "You need not have waited till this moment to do me that service. You are selling me your influence — *Pasques-Dieu!* to me, Louis XI.! Are you the master, and am I your servant?"

"Ah, sire," said the old man, "I was waiting to surprise you agreeably with news of the arrangements I had made for you in Ghent; I was awaiting confirmation from Oosterlinck through that apprentice. What has become of that young man?"

"Enough!" said the king; "this is only one more blunder you have committed. I do not like persons to meddle in my affairs without my knowledge. Enough! leave me; I wish to reflect upon all this."

Maître Cornélius found the agility of youth to run downstairs to the lower rooms where he was certain to find his sister.

"Ah! Jeanne, my dearest soul, a hoard is hidden in this house; I have put thirteen hundred thousand crowns and all the jewels somewhere. I, I, I am the robber!"

Jeanne Hoogworst rose from her stool and stood erect as if the seat she quitted were of red-hot iron. This shock was so violent for an old maid accustomed for years to reduce herself by voluntary fasts, that she trembled in every limb, and horrible pains were in her back. She turned pale by degrees, and her face, — the changes in which were difficult to decipher among its

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wrinkles, — became distorted while her brother explained to her the malady of which he was the victim, and the extraordinary situation in which he found himself.

"Louis XI. and I," he said in conclusion, "have just been lying to each other like two pedlers of cocoanuts. You understand, my girl, that if he follows me, he will get the secret of the hiding-place. The king alone can watch my wanderings at night. I don't feel sure that his conscience, near as he is to death, can resist thirteen hundred thousand crowns. We *must* be beforehand with him; we must find the hidden treasure and send it to Ghent, and you alone — "

Cornélius stopped suddenly, and seemed to be weighing the heart of the sovereign who had had thoughts of parricide at twenty-two years of age. When his judgment of Louis XI. was concluded, he rose abruptly like a man in haste to escape a pressing danger. At this instant, his sister, too feeble or too strong for such a crisis, fell stark; she was dead. Maître Cornélius seized her, and shook her violently, crying out:

"You cannot die now. There is time enough later — Oh! it is all over. The old hag never could do anything at the right time."

He closed her eyes and laid her on the floor. Then the good and noble feelings which lay at the bottom of his soul came back to him, and, half forgetting his hidden treasure, he cried out mournfully: —

"Oh! my poor companion, have I lost you? — you who understood me so well! Oh! you were my real treasure. There it lies, my treasure! With you, my

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peace of mind, my affections, all, are gone. If you had only known what good it would have done me to live two nights longer, you would have lived, solely to please me, my poor sister! Ah, Jeanne! thirteen hundred thousand crowns! Won't that wake you? — No, she is dead!"

Thereupon, he sat down, and said no more; but two great tears issued from his eyes and rolled down his hollow cheeks; then, with strange exclamations of grief, he locked up the room and returned to the king. Louis XI. was struck with the expression of sorrow on the moistened features of his old friend.

"What is the matter?" he asked.

"Ah! sire, misfortunes never come singly. My sister is dead. She precedes me there below," he said, pointing to the floor with a dreadful gesture.

"Enough!" cried Louis XI., who did not like to hear of death.

"I make you my heir. I care for nothing now. Here are my keys. Hang me, if that's your good pleasure. Take all, ransack the house; it is full of gold. I give up all to you —"

"Come, come, crony," replied Louis XI., who was partly touched by the sight of this strange suffering, "we shall find your treasure some fine night, and the sight of such riches will give you heart to live. I will come back in the course of this week —"

"As you please, sire."

At that answer the king, who had made a few steps toward the door of the chamber, turned round abruptly. The two men looked at each other with an expression that neither pen nor pencil can reproduce.

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"Adieu, my crony," said Louis XI. at last in a curt voice, pushing up his cap.

"May God and the Virgin keep you in their good graces!" replied the silversmith humbly, conducting the king to the door of the house.

After so long a friendship, the two men found a barrier raised between them by suspicion and gold; though they had always been like one man on the two points of gold and suspicion. But they knew each other so well, they had so completely the habit, one may say, of each other, that the king could divine, from the tone in which Cornélius uttered the words, "As you please, sire," the repugnance that his visits would henceforth cause to the silversmith, just as the latter recognized a declaration of war in the "Adieu, my crony," of the king.

Thus Louis XI. and his *torçonnier* parted much in doubt as to the conduct they ought in future to hold to each other. The monarch possessed the secret of the Fleming; but on the other hand, the latter could, by his connections, bring about one of the finest acquisitions that any king of France had ever made; namely, that of the domains of the house of Burgundy, which the sovereigns of Europe were then coveting. The marriage of the celebrated Marguerite depended on the people of Ghent and the Flemings who surrounded her. The gold and the influence of Cornélius could powerfully support the negotiations now begun by Desquerdes, the general to whom Louis XI. had given the command of the army encamped on the frontiers of Belgium. These two master-foxes were, therefore, like two duellists, whose arms are paralyzed by chance.

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So, whether it were that from that day the king's health failed and went from bad to worse, or that Cornélius did assist in bringing into France Marguerite of Burgundy — who arrived at Amboise in July, 1438, to marry the Dauphin to whom she was betrothed in the chapel of the castle — certain it is that the king took no steps in the matter of the hidden treasure; he levied no tribute from his silversmith, and the pair remained in the cautious condition of an armed friendship. Happily for Cornélius a rumor was spread about Tours that his sister was the actual robber, and that she had been secretly put to death by Tristan. Otherwise, if the true history had been known, the whole town would have risen as one man to destroy the Malemaison before the king could have taken measures to protect it.

But, although these historical conjectures have some foundation so far as the inaction of Louis XI. is concerned, it is not so as regards Cornélius Hoogworst. There was no inaction there. The silversmith spent the first days which succeeded that fatal night in ceaseless occupation. Like carnivorous animals confined in cages, he went and came, smelling for gold in every corner of his house; he studied the cracks and crevices, he sounded the walls, he besought the trees of the garden, the foundations of the house, the roofs of the turrets, the earth and the heavens, to give him back his treasure. Often he stood motionless for hours, casting his eyes on all sides, plunging them into the void. Striving for the miracles of ecstasy and the powers of sorcery, he tried to see his riches through space and obstacles. He was constantly absorbed in one over-

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whelming thought, consumed with a single desire that burned his entrails, gnawed more cruelly still by the ever-increasing agony of the duel he was fighting with himself since his passion for gold had turned to his own injury, — a species of uncompleted suicide which kept him at once in the miseries of life and in those of death.

Never was a Vice more punished by itself. A miser, locked by accident into the subterranean strong-room that contains his treasure, has, like Sardanapalus, the happiness of dying in the midst of his wealth. But Cornélius, the robber and the robbed, knowing the secret of neither the one nor the other, possessed and did not possess his treasure, — a novel, fantastic, but continually terrible torture. Sometimes, becoming forgetful, he would leave the little gratings of his door wide open, and then the passers in the street could see that already wizened man, planted on his two legs in the midst of his untilled garden, absolutely motionless, and casting on those who watched him a fixed gaze, the insupportable light of which froze them with terror. If, by chance, he walked through the streets of Tours, he seemed like a stranger in them; he knew not where he was, nor whether the sun or the moon were shining. Often he would ask his way of those who passed him, believing that he was still in Ghent, and seeming to be in search of something lost.

The most perennial and the best materialized of human ideas, the idea by which man reproduces himself by creating outside of himself the fictitious being called Property, that mental demon, drove its steel claws perpetually into his heart. Then, in the midst of this torture,

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Fear arose, with all its accompanying sentiments. Two men had his secret, the secret he did not know himself. Louis XI. or Coyctier could post men to watch him during his sleep and discover the unknown gulf into which he had cast his riches, — those riches he had watered with the blood of so many innocent men. And then, beside his fear, arose Remorse.

In order to prevent during his lifetime the abduction of his hidden treasure, he took the most cruel precautions against sleep; besides which, his commercial relations put him in the way of obtaining powerful anti-narcotics. His struggles to keep awake were awful — alone with night, silence, Remorse, and Fear, with all the thoughts that man, instinctively perhaps, has best embodied — obedient thus to a moral truth as yet devoid of actual proof.

At last this man so powerful, this heart so hardened by political and commercial life, this genius, obscure in history, succumbed to the horrors of the torture he had himself created. Maddened by certain thoughts more agonizing than those he had as yet resisted, he cut his throat with a razor.

This death coincided, almost, with that of Louis XI. Nothing then restrained the populace, and Malemaison, that Evil House, was pillaged. A tradition exists among the older inhabitants of Touraine that a contractor of public works, named Bohier, found the miser's treasure and used it in the construction of Chenonceaux, that marvellous château which, in spite of the wealth of several kings and the taste of Diane de Poitiers and Catherine de' Medici for building, remains unfinished to the present day.

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Happily for Marie de Sassenage, the Comte de Saint-Vallier died, as we know, in his embassy. The family did not become extinct. After the departure of the count, the countess gave birth to a son, whose career was famous in the history of France under the reign of François I. He was saved by his daughter, the celebrated Diane de Poitiers, the illegitimate great-granddaughter of Louis XI., who became the illegitimate wife, the beloved mistress of Henri II. — for bastardy and love were hereditary in that family of nobles.

THE END.

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